TED KENNEDY, THE FIGHTING LIBERAL

THE Nation.

WHAT THE PUBLIC DOESN'T KNOW ABOUT THE SECRET PROGRAM OF SPYING, ASSASSINATION AND TORTURE CONDUCTED BY THE US GOVERNMENT: AND HOW CONGRESS ONCE EXPOSED IT AND CAN INVESTIGATE IT AGAIN

BY CHRISTOPHER HAYES

SEPTEMBER 14, 2009
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Letters

The Buck Stops Here

ELLICOTT CITY, MD.
William Greider's "Dismantling the Temple" [August 3/10] may be the most important summary analysis yet of the current economic crisis and its roots in the mysterious role of the Federal Reserve. If it inspires your readers (especially legislators) to educate themselves about how the economy really functions and who the real players are in the making of economic policy, it will have succeeded in bringing about the hoped-for rebellion. Money, after all, is only a means of exchange, and its value derives from the consent and trust of those who use it.
BRENDA C. CARR

THREE OAKS, MICH.
William Greider writes, "Bernanke essentially used the Fed's money-creation power in a way that resembles the 'greenbacks' Abraham Lincoln printed to fight the Civil War." But Greider fails to mention that Lincoln's greenbacks circulated interest-free on the "full faith and credit" of the United States, as Ellen Hodgson Brown describes in her excellent book *The Web of Debt*. On the other hand, Brown says, every dollar bill today is a Federal Reserve Note, lent to the government to be paid back with interest.

In 1972, Brown writes, the Treasury Department calculated "the amount of interest that would have been paid if the $400 million in greenbacks had been borrowed from the banks instead.... Lincoln saved the government a total of $4 billion in interest, just by avoiding this $400 million loan."

The Federal Reserve needs to disappear, and very quickly.
PHIL BENDE

McNamara's Legacy

ASTORIA, N.Y.
As one of those men Robert McNamara sent off to fight in Vietnam after he had already concluded that the United States could not win there, I was entirely confident that I could and would never forgive the man. But on reading Jonathan Schell's truly thoughtful "Remembering Robert McNamara" [August 3/10], I find my implacable anger a little less implacable.

Schell asks how many of our fearless leaders have ever acknowledged that they'd made a mistake, or said, "I was terribly wrong." He comes up with one—McNamara. I reluctantly agree. McNamara, no matter how badly I want to deny it, helped show us the direction in which we should be heading.

And yet. McNamara apparently continued covering his own ass long after he understood his folly, while hundreds of thousands continued to die. This still sounds pretty much like the behavior of everyone else involved in promoting that ill-begotten war.
GLENN PETERSEN

SAN FRANCISCO
I am of a '60s antiwar movement that can never forgive Robert McNamara for his central role in the Vietnam War, though of course he had the decency to acknowledge many years later that the war was wrong. Not so Henry Kissinger, who took up where McNamara left off.

I interviewed both men in 2001 for a PBS documentary, *The Sixties: The Years That Shaped a Generation*. McNamara told me that he'd come to realize the war was a tragedy that could have been avoided. He said his "greatest regret" was urging President Johnson in 1965 to commit American troops to a land war in Asia.

But Kissinger was unreconstructed, unapologetic. "If you are going to ask whether I feel guilty about Vietnam, the interview is over," Kissinger said before I asked my first question. "I'll walk out."

I told him I had just interviewed McNamara. That got his attention. And then he did something I'll never forget: he began to cry. Actually, he *pretended* to cry.

"Boohoo, boohoo," Kissinger blubbered, rubbing his eyes. "He's still beating his breast, right? Still feeling guilty." He

(continued on page 24)

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Afghan War Turnoff

Official results from Afghanistan's presidential election are not due until September 17, and widespread reports of vote-buying, ballot-rigging and intimidation make it unlikely that the final numbers will accurately reflect the will of the Afghan people. But we do have a sense of the evolving sentiments of the American people with regard to the almost eight-year-old US occupation of a country known as "the graveyard of empires." Americans, once overwhelmingly supportive of the intervention, are wising up to conditions in Afghanistan, which, as Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Adm. Mike Mullen admits, are "serious and deteriorating." And a majority is increasingly aware that the more blood and treasure we pour down the Afghan drain, the less we'll have to spend on economic recovery, healthcare reform and building a green economy at home. Those who want to protect Obama's reform agenda should seek alternatives to a militarized strategy in Afghanistan.

EDITORIAL

Mullen's commanders are reportedly readying a request for more US troops. Even without an additional buildup, troop totals are expected to reach 68,000 by the end of this year. President Obama, who now calls Afghanistan "a war of necessity," seems inclined to wade deeper into the quagmire. He's doing so just as many US allies—including a growing number of British officials—have begun talking about an exit strategy.

The American people, conscious that this summer has produced the highest death tolls yet for US troops, are disinclined to follow the lead of the generals or their president. Fifty-one percent say the human and economic costs of continued US occupation are too great; according to a new *Washington Post*/ABC News poll, they oppose dispatching more troops by an almost 2-to-1 margin. The fact that they are turning against this misguided enterprise presents an opening for Congressional critics and activists to check Obama's wrongheaded strategy. Senator Russ Feingold has spoken out against further escalation and for a withdrawal timeline. Almost 100 House members are co-sponsoring Representative Jim McGovern's call for an exit strategy.

Robert Greenwald's "Rethink Afghanistan" project is highlighting the fact that civilians, especially women, are ill served by the occupation and that "there is no 'victory' to be won in Afghanistan." Groups like Peace Action and Progressive Democrats of America are ramping up campaigns against a new troop surge. And the Friends Committee on National Legislation has used a recent RAND study to build a case for using diplomacy (including negotiations with elements of the Taliban), development of civil society, effective policing and the wise use of intelligence to combat terrorist groups operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan. As FCNL's Joe Volk has written, "Of course, the answer is not to just stop the war fighting and do nothing. The answer is to stop the war fighting, deny the terrorists their cosmic battle and shift into a law enforcement mode through international cooperation, development, and diplomacy."

That's a smart strategy. Unfortunately, the administration won't embrace it without a push from Congress. That's why the McGovern resolution, which has bipartisan support, is such an important initiative. Getting more House members to sponsor it will take work, but the argument is clear: a growing movement is seeking alternatives to military escalation. Trust the judgment of the American majority, who say this war is no longer worth fighting.

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Poll: On which issue have the mainstream media done the worst job?

Calendar: Post your event

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The Fighting Liberal

Senator Edward Kennedy, who died on August 25 after a battle with brain cancer, was one of the giants of American political life. For five decades, virtually every major piece of legislation to advance civil rights, healthcare and the economic well-being of Americans bore his name and resulted from his tenacious, passionate and effective efforts. His commitment to public service was driven by an exuberant engagement with politics, a deep sense of compassion and a belief that every American is entitled to dignity as well as equal justice under the law.

By the time he challenged Jimmy Carter for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1980, Ted Kennedy had become the national tribune of the liberal cause, within his party and without. Stumbles at the start hobbled his candidacy, but Kennedy was unbowed. He carried on, and began winning primaries and accumulating delegates. For a moment, it seemed as if he might snatch victory from the jaws of defeat.

That was not to be. So on the second night of the Democratic National Convention in New York City that summer, Kennedy addressed the delegates. His speech, the most inspired in a career of inspired oratory, was not a concession. It was a call to arms. Kennedy's was a plea to the party to stay true to "the cause of the common man and the common woman"—a call that, unfortunately, would not be heeded by too many Democratic nominees who would campaign for lesser purposes. "I'm asking you—I am asking you to renew the commitment of the Democratic Party to economic justice," Kennedy proclaimed, as he outlined the jobs-with-justice pledges he and his delegates had nailed to the party platform. "Simply put, they are the heart of our tradition, and they have been the soul of our party across the generations. It is the glory and the greatness of our tradition to speak for those who have no voice, to remember those who are forgotten, to respond to the frustrations and fulfill the aspirations of all Americans seeking a better life in a better land. We dare not forsake that tradition. We cannot let the great purposes of the Democratic Party become the bygone passages of history."

Kennedy ended that speech by declaring, "For me, a few hours ago, this campaign came to an end. For all those whose cares have been our concern, the work goes on, the cause endures, the hope still lives, and the dream shall never die." The struggle for the soul of the Democratic Party went on over the next twenty-nine years, with Kennedy leading the fight for economic justice and a sane foreign policy, a long-term concern about which he penned articles for *The Nation*. Having witnessed America's disastrous involvement in Vietnam, Kennedy was an early, eloquent and unwavering opponent of George W. Bush's Iraq debacle.

Kennedy fought for human rights—especially gay rights, which he embraced before most other politicians—and the great cause of his life: creating a universal healthcare system. He cast the right votes in the Senate, and as his stature grew he even figured out how to get some conservative Republicans to do the same—earning a reputation as a master legislator not

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because of his compromises but because, even with Republicans in charge, his focus on human needs and the policies that might meet them (family and medical leave, a patients' bill of rights, expanding school lunch programs, raising the minimum wage, education reform) broke barriers of personality and partisanship. Unfortunately, the Democratic Party often failed to follow Kennedy's example. Party leaders edged to the right, embracing the centrist caution of so-called New Democrats, compromising with the Southern conservatism of the Blue Dogs.

Kennedy's early support for Barack Obama's presidential candidacy, eloquently outlined in his final address to the Democratic convention in Denver last year, was never naïve. Kennedy knew the younger man would stumble and struggle, make mistakes, disappoint the faithful. Kennedy himself had done all these things. But he believed that Obama was made of stronger stuff, the same mettle that led a defeated presidential candidate to deliver a fight-on address to the 1980 Democratic National Convention and then to do just that across the next three decades. It is this understanding that "the cause endures" that made Kennedy so inspiring, and so essential to the political and policy struggles of his time. If he was right to place his faith in Obama, as we now must hope more fervently than ever, the loss of the liberal lion will be a cause of sadness but not a setback. And we will know that on that hot summer night in New York City twenty-nine years ago, Ted Kennedy was right: "the dream shall never die."

Flushing Blackwater

COMMENT

Blackwater, the private mercenary company owned by Erik Prince, has been thrust back into the spotlight by a series of stunning revelations about its role in covert US programs. Since at least 2002, Blackwater has worked for the CIA in Afghanistan and Pakistan on "black" contracts. On August 19, the *New York Times* revealed that the company was, in fact, a central part of a secret CIA assassination program that Dick Cheney allegedly ordered concealed from Congress. The paper then reported that Blackwater remains a key player in the widening air war in Pakistan and Afghanistan, where it arms drone aircraft. These disclosures follow allegations—made under oath by former Blackwater employees—that Prince murdered or facilitated the murder of potential government informants and that he "views himself as a Christian crusader tasked with eliminating Muslims and the Islamic faith from the globe."

In addition, Blackwater is being investigated by the Justice Department for possible crimes ranging from weapons smuggling to manslaughter and by the IRS for possible tax evasion. It is being sued in federal courts by scores of Iraqi civilians for alleged war crimes and extrajudicial killings. Two of its men have pleaded guilty to weapons-smuggling charges; another pleaded guilty to the unprovoked manslaughter of an Iraqi civilian, and

Noted.

HELP FOR HEALTHCARE HEROES: House progressives are getting some extra help in their fight against attempts by the GOP and Blue Dog Democrats to remove the public option from the healthcare bill. Net activists at **Blue America PAC**, with support from bloggers, are collecting donations online for members of Congress who vow to vote against any healthcare bill that does not contain a strong public option. So far they've raised more than $400,000. The money will go to sixty-five members of the House, including prominent progressives like **Dennis Kucinich** and **Barney Frank** and freshman members like **Judy Chu** (California) and **Chellie Pingree** (Maine).

"Supporters of real reform are being heard, not with thousand-dollar-an-hour lobbyists but with a lot of $10 contributions. It's great to see," says New York Congressman **Anthony Weiner**, one of the "Health Care Heroes." According to **Jane Hamsher** of the blog Firedoglake, one of the campaign's organizers, the money raised is in the same league as donations from the largest insurance companies. Hamsher says, "We've got sixty-five members who have pledged to vote against any bill that does not contain a public plan.… Our task right now is twofold: can we increase their number, and can we hold them?" SARAH JAFFE

TORTURE AT THE TOP: Attorney General **Eric Holder** was, by all accounts, horrified when he learned the extent of abuses committed by CIA operatives without the informed consent of Congress or legal legitimacy. So, despite a last-minute objection by the ranking Republican on the Senate Intelligence Committee, Missouri Senator **Kit Bond**, Holder has assigned a prosecutor to determine if a full-scale investigation of torture tactics used during the Bush years is warranted.

Holder does deserve a measure of credit for launching what he calls a "preliminary review"—but only a small measure. His "anemic" response, as the ACLU describes it, seems to lack the focus or firmness needed to achieve accountability. There is nothing **Dick Cheney** and his allies in Congress and the conservative media would prefer more than a narrowly defined investigation of low-level CIA operatives. The right knows how to make "heroes" of those who dutifully carry out orders—even lawless and inhumane ones. It's not that they care about the grunts. Rather, the focus on those who commit dirty deeds distracts attention from those who authorized the deeds.

Congresswoman **Jan Schakowsky** and Senator **Russ Feingold**, the steadiest proponents of an inquiry, are right: a proper investigation must target those who initiated and authorized wrongdoing. Says Feingold, "This investigation should not be limited to those who carried out interrogations.… The abuses that were officially sanctioned amounted to torture, and those at the very top who authorized, ordered or sought to provide legal cover for them should be held accountable." JOHN NICHOLS

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five others have been indicted on similar counts. The US military is investigating Blackwater's killing of civilians in Afghanistan in May, and reports are emerging that the company may be implicated in the CIA's extraordinary rendition program.

And yet, despite these black marks, the Obama administration continues to keep Blackwater on the government's payroll. In Afghanistan and Pakistan, Blackwater still works for the CIA, the State Department and the Defense Department to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars, and its continuing presence is an indicator of just how entrenched private corporations are in the US war machinery. The United States now deploys more private forces (74,000) than uniformed soldiers (57,000) in Afghanistan. While the majority of these contractors are not armed, a sizable number carry weapons, and their ranks are swelling. A recent Defense Department census reports that as of June 30, armed DoD contractors in Afghanistan had increased by 20 percent from the first quarter of 2009.

With the exception of a few legislators, notably Representatives Henry Waxman and Jan Schakowsky, Congress has left the use of private military contractors largely unmonitored. But the recent disclosures of Blackwater's covert activities may finally force Congress to take action. At the very least, the Obama administration should be required to disclose current and past federal contracts with all of Prince's companies and affiliates, including those registered offshore.

Congress can take Schakowsky's lead and ask the Obama administration why it is continuing to work with Blackwater. Schakowsky has called on Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Defense Secretary Robert Gates to review all of the company's existing contracts and not to award any new ones to its many affiliates. Congressional intelligence committees should also conduct a wide-ranging investigation into Blackwater's involvement in the CIA assassination program. Were Blackwater operatives involved in actual killings? Who approved the company's involvement? Was Congress notified? How high up the chain of command did the covert relationship with the company go? Was Blackwater active on US soil? What role, if any, did/does Blackwater play in secretly transporting prisoners?

This investigation must include the sworn testimony of former top CIA officials who were later hired or paid by Blackwater. Among these are Alvin "Buzzy" Krongard, the former number-three man at the agency, who gave Blackwater its first CIA contract and then served on the company's board, and J. Cofer Black, the former head of the CIA's counterterrorism unit, which ran the assassination program. Black later became the vice chair of Blackwater and ran Total Intelligence Solutions, Prince's private CIA. Total Intelligence has been simultaneously employed by the US government, foreign governments and private companies, an arrangement that may have created conflicts of interest that the House and Senate intelligence committees are obliged to investigate. Congress should also ask if national security is compromised when the knowledge, contacts and access possessed by former high-ranking CIA officials like Black and Krongard are placed on the open market.

John Kerry, chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has questioned whether Blackwater used its State Department clearance as cover to gather information for targeted killings. Kerry should hold hearings in which Hillary Clinton and Condoleezza Rice would be compelled to testify on the matter. The oversight committees should probe allegations that Blackwater was involved in arms smuggling and extrajudicial killings in Iraq, while committees dealing with military affairs should investigate what impact Blackwater's actions in Iraq have had on the safety of US troops. An invaluable asset for these investigations could be the Commission on Wartime Contracting, established by Senators Jim Webb and Claire McCaskill. Finally, the Justice Department should probe the murder, smuggling and other allegations against Prince and his executives.

In all of this, Blackwater has proved itself to be a whack-a-mole: it keeps popping up. Despite the Iraqi government's ban on the company, its operatives remain in Iraq a full two years after the September 2007 Nisour Square massacre, in which seventeen Iraqi civilians were gunned down in Baghdad. This resilience means that the investigations into the company must be comprehensive and coordinated.

Lastly, it is a mistake to think that Blackwater is the only problem. In Iraq, for example, the Obama administration is replacing Blackwater with the private contractor Triple Canopy, which, in addition to hiring some of Blackwater's men, has its own questionable history, including allegations of shooting civilians and hiring forces from countries with a history of human rights abuses. Blackwater is but one fruit on the poisonous tree of military outsourcing. It is imperative that Congress confront the intimate linking of corporate profits to US wars and lethal, covert operations. JEREMY SCAHILL

Jeremy Scahill is a Puffin Foundation Writing Fellow at The Nation Institute and the author of Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army.

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

Town-Hall Meetings

With curses, guns and red-faced rants,
Here comes the wing-nut faction.
The right wing's leaders smile and say,
"Democracy in action."

Paranoia Strikes Deep

"If something is not done shortly, this country is going the way of…Italy, Germany…or Russia, and it is high time we did something," exclaimed Irénée du Pont, one of the more prominent conservatives of the 1930s. Many of his fellow Americans agreed there was good cause to be alarmed: a new Democratic president was proposing an unprecedented

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expansion of federal power that would increase taxes on the well-off and dole out benefits to the jobless and other unfortunates. Several spokesmen on the right made more ominous vows: "So help me God, I will be instrumental in taking a Communist from the chair once occupied by Washington," declared Father Charles Coughlin, who commanded one of the largest radio audiences in the nation.

COMMENT

There is nothing particularly novel about today's protesters, including one failed vice presidential candidate and the chairman of the Republican Party, who have been screaming that Barack Obama is a closet socialist—or fascist—whose plans for reforming the healthcare system will destroy their freedoms and perhaps kill off their loved ones. They are just the latest representatives of a long national tradition: fear of a strong central government that periodically leads some Americans to make extraordinary leaps of logic and challenge the power of the alleged leviathan.

This tradition is, in fact, as old as the nation itself. During the 1760s colonists along the Eastern Seaboard were convinced that King George III and his ministers meant to abolish their liberties and yoke their economy to the venal desires of the imperial court in London. They made a revolution to thwart this wicked plot, one that historians now agree never existed. Even after the Constitution was ratified, Americans were more comfortable when state and local governments levied taxes and enforced moralistic laws like Prohibition than when the feds tried to do the same thing.

Meanwhile, the drumbeat of conspiracy thinking went on. In 1860 most white Southerners were certain that Abraham Lincoln, newly elected president, was, like John Brown, encouraging slaves to murder their masters. This fear helped make secession—and civil war—inevitable. Almost a century later, Senator Joseph McCarthy, then near the height of his popularity, charged that George Marshall, a decorated general and former secretary of state, was enmeshed in "a conspiracy on a scale so immense as to dwarf any previous such venture in the history of man."

Some figures on the left have made outsize accusations of their own. In the 1990s Maxine Waters, the liberal Congresswoman from California, charged the CIA with flooding the streets of South Central Los Angeles with crack cocaine. And Oliver Stone's cinematic exposé of a fanciful civilian-military plot to assassinate JFK did quite splendidly at the box office.

But the habit has always been more common on the right, and with good reason. Most liberals and radicals want the federal government, the only national institution chosen by the people at large, to satisfy social needs that business will not meet and private charities lack the resources to fulfill. Although socialism has never been a very popular faith in the United States, the American left's call for a stronger, more caring government does echo its more class-conscious counterparts in other industrial and postindustrial nations.

And conservative movements that stoke panic about the designs of big government have often won the day. In the 1870s Democrats who attacked Radical Republicans for imposing "Negro rule" on the South did much to sap Northern white support for Reconstruction; the result was a brutal segregationist order that endured for almost a century. The same fear that white Americans are losing control to blacks and recent immigrants has animated other wild attacks on federal power over the years, one reason it took so long for Congress to pass strong civil rights and voting rights bills. Redbaiting has done effective service as well. In the late 1940s the American Medical Association helped defeat Harry Truman's plan for national health insurance by publishing an erroneous quote by Lenin declaring that "socialized medicine is the keystone to the arch of the Socialist State." If all this be paranoia, the right has certainly made the most of it.

But such mendacious offensives do not always succeed. During Franklin Roosevelt's first term in the White House, du Pont and other corporate moguls funded a lobby, the American Liberty League, which did its worst to deny him reelection. The league even included two former Democratic nominees for president. But the Depression had made most people suspicious about the laissez-faire dogma of big business, and FDR easily parried its charges.

Father Coughlin seemed to pose a more serious threat. The eloquent priest, who was Rush Limbaugh in a Roman collar, attracted a cross section of disgruntled white Americans, and the New Deal could not have triumphed without the support of his base among ordinary Catholic voters. But when Coughlin spoke at rallies, the pleasantly modulated rhythms of a parish cleric were replaced by the boastful ranting of a demagogue. On newsreels seen by millions of moviegoers, it was he, not the president, who seemed like an American version of Mussolini or Hitler.

Roosevelt, in contrast, exuded empathy for a nation in distress. During one of his earliest fireside chats, he invited Americans to "tell me your troubles." The cascade of mail he received yielded significant political benefits. One white textile worker from North Carolina told a reporter that FDR was "the only man we ever had in the White House who would understand that my boss is a son of a bitch." Never before had so many wage-earners, small farmers and their families allowed themselves to expect so much from the government. The New Deal didn't end the Depression, but it did co-opt populist movements—of labor, the elderly and small farmers—that fed off the anger resulting from economic collapse. Votes from those constituencies kept liberal Democrats in the White House for two unbroken decades.

Barack Obama has found it more difficult to turn away the contemporary edition of the fanatical right. Conservative ideology has been in the saddle for three decades now, and the recession began too late in the Bush administration to entirely discredit its free-market dogma or those who speak on its behalf. The abundance of slick, if inaccurate, ads against healthcare reform also shows that businesses afraid of falling profits remain as central to the modern right as they have been since the movement sprang to life in the late 1940s.

Ironically, the very ineptitude of conservative governance in the recent past makes Americans more open to the right's arguments now that it is out of national power. Why trust the federal state to do anything it promises? The last "big gov-

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ernment" program that aided a large number of Americans was Medicare, enacted almost forty-five years ago—so long that some deluded recipients don't recognize it as a public program at all.

If Obama and his progressive allies hope to defeat the latest assault on federal power, they will need to go beyond the president's artful ambivalence about the subject. Like FDR, they will have to talk about government as the property of all the people and push through programs that make its benefits palpable to the great majority. The liberal left is larger than at any time in years; but it remains fragmented by age and race and stymied by a lack of coordination between bloggers and NGOs, who speak mainly to the middle-class young, and unions and community organizers, who struggle to serve workers and the poor. For all its flaws, the national state is the only common political ground we have. To make that case does not advocate socialism; it advances democracy. MICHAEL KAZIN

Michael Kazin's latest book is A Godly Hero: The Life of William Jennings Bryan. *He is co-editor of* Dissent *and teaches history at Georgetown University.*

Aborn for Manhattan DA

COMMENT

Advocates who have fought for decades for criminal justice reform rightly see this moment as one when the stars are aligned for change. At the state level, the fiscal crisis has governors and legislators looking for alternatives to spending $50 billion a year on incarceration. At the federal level, new leadership in the Justice Department is aiming for a smarter approach to public safety, while leaders like Senator Jim Webb have been pushing for a national reconsideration of issues like drug treatment, effective parole policy, education for inmates and re-entry programs.

This year New York State took a major step in the right direction by reforming its draconian and counterproductive Rockefeller drug laws. Gone are the mandatory-minimum sentences for nonviolent offenders, giving judges wider discretion in sentencing and the possibility of treatment instead of lengthy incarceration. In New York City, where Robert Morgenthau is stepping down as Manhattan district attorney after thirty-four years, the hard-fought race to determine his successor in this high-profile post is providing a unique opportunity for a progressive re-envisioning of our criminal justice system, not only in the city but on a national scale.

Richard Aborn is the candidate who most passionately and boldly describes such an alternative future. He is also the candidate with the clearest record of lifelong and unwavering opposition to the death penalty and strong advocacy of Rockefeller drug-law reform.

Aborn is experienced in the way the system works (and fails). He served for five years as a prosecutor under Morgenthau. Since then, he has had broad experience working for a progressive approach to fighting crime. As president of Handgun Control Inc. (now the Brady Campaign) in the 1990s, he played a key role in passing the Brady Bill and the national assault weapons ban. He also led an independent investigation of the NYPD's response to civilian complaints of misconduct and the disciplinary decisions following the 1999 police shooting of the unarmed civilian Amadou Diallo. As president of the Citizens Crime Commission of New York, Aborn recognized the failure of mass incarceration without opportunities for rehabilitation and the critical need to focus on prevention.

Aborn speaks openly about the injustice of nearly one out of three African-American men spending part of their lifetime in prison, and about the need to address the fact that four out of five young people are re-arrested within a few years of their first offense. He believes that it's both more humane and more effective to stop crime before it starts—by getting guns off our streets before they're used, by providing alternatives for at-risk kids and by treating drug addiction as a public health problem rather than a crime. And while most prosecutors judge success by tallying the total number of "sentence years" they accumulate in sending defendants to prison, Aborn has said he will emphasize innovative crime-prevention strategies. "We need a DA who knows that one of the best crime-fighting tools is a good after-school program or a job," he says.

It's noteworthy that on gun control, as the Obama administration and Democratic Congressional leaders back away from campaign pledges to renew the assault weapons ban and other sensible crime-fighting measures, Aborn continues to speak out boldly. He has laid out the most innovative ideas for addressing the gun problem—including a proposal to halt interstate trafficking of hard-to-trace guns, which is a major factor in violent crime—in the absence of Congressional willingness to take on the NRA. It is no surprise that the NRA is viciously attacking his campaign.

Despite being a political newcomer—and with Morgenthau and the *New York Times* endorsing another candidate—it is significant that Aborn's experience and vision have won him the enthusiastic support of a diverse coalition, including law enforcement professionals, the Association of Legal Aid Attorneys, seventeen of the twenty-one elected New York City officials who have made endorsements and the progressive Working Families Party. The campaign's momentum was recently speeded by US Representative Jerrold Nadler, who endorsed Aborn as "a true progressive leader who knows the DA office inside and out…[and] is far and away the best candidate for district attorney."

This is a moment when the city, state and nation need a fearless, bona fide progressive and experienced lawyer and leader to take the helm at the Manhattan district attorney's office, where Aborn would play a highly visible role in making the city safe while introducing smart reforms in the way it deals with crime. The support for him among leaders and activists in Manhattan, as well as growing grassroots enthusiasm among voters, signals clearly that Richard Aborn is the right candidate at the right time. There being no GOP candidate, a win for Aborn in the September 15 Democratic primary could seal the deal.

KATRINA VANDEN HEUVEL

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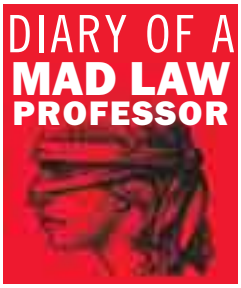
Patricia J. Williams

Reverse Nazism and the War on Universal Healthcare

The spinmeisters of the right have done quite a job with what used to be straightforward English etymology. Thanks to Rush Limbaugh and Fox News, "integration" was inverted to mean "takeover" and "colorblindness" is code for abandoning the advances of the civil rights movement, which itself is synonymous with an "industry" of exclusion. It's no surprise, then, that whenever a piece of progressive legislation comes to the table, the same manipulations come into play from right-wing pundits who shamelessly profess their desire to see the Obama presidency fail. Thus it is that America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009 is being turned upside down as the neat equivalent of Germany's Bankrupting Forced Death Act of 1939.

If you are watching the healthcare town-hall ruckuses with only common dictionary meanings in your head, you will be struck by the protesters' general incoherence and outright nonsense, bearing no rational connection to the actual draft of the healthcare bill. As Representative Barney Frank demanded of one constituent who likened the bill to Nazism, "On what planet do you spend most of your time?"



But if you listen as though deciphering pig Latin and realize that this demographic is speaking from a well-managed, near-hypnotic looking-glass world where every word from the mouth of a Democrat (or a liberal, or a Latina, or a Canadian) is a lie, a betrayal… then it all makes sense. Their world truly has been turned inside out, by the election, by the economy, by the precarious conditions that threaten us all. But for those whose sense of identity has been premised on a raced, masculinist, conservative Christian hierarchy of American power, the world must seem even more emotionally terrifying than any actual facts would indicate.

So reversal is key to understanding what's going on. It's not just "lies"; it's the expressive angst of people whose felt power relations have been turned upside down. It's not factually accurate, but this is how they feel. Obama is Hitler! Health insurance for all means euthanasia for me! "My" country is suddenly "their" country.

Of course, there are special interests who profit from the magnification of these fears. Betsy McCaughey, a former shill for a medical instruments company, is the original source of the "death panel" rumors. From the beginning, big pharmaceutical and insurance companies, with an almost inconceivable amount of money to spend, have been muddying the waters. Think about the recent revelation that Merck secretly financed the publication of a fake medical journal that was designed to look objective but merely touted the supposed benefits of its products—and included "paid advertisements" for the company's drugs. What is truth in such a corrupt hall of mirrors?

But what does the bill actually say? A quick summary of the most contentious point: the act would provide reimbursement if you seek medical counseling about end-of-life decisions. This option allows you to plan what you would like to have done in the case of catastrophic or terminal illness—nothing forced about it. All extraordinary measures will continue to be used to resuscitate someone whose wishes are unknown: feeding tube, intubation, cracking ribs to defibrillate, whatever it takes. By contrast, it is private, profit-motivated insurance companies—which deny coverage based on pre-existing conditions and restrict one's choice of doctor, medical treatments and length of hospital stays (based on actuarial tables)—that bear the greatest resemblance to a mulching euthanasia machine. When nearly 50 million US citizens live without any health coverage, how on earth could a purely voluntary public option be considered throwing people under the bus?

Let me acknowledge the genuine ideological and moral misgivings behind some of the protests. Many libertarians hate anything the government does, no matter how monopolistic or quasi-governmental the power of pharmaceutical and insurance companies. But they are a minority and not generally the bloc using the language of reversal and code. Similarly, there are those with genuine moral or religious qualms: "prolifers" who, if they believe that life begins at the molecular moment of conception, could also think that any end-of-life consultation is against God's will. This would be the same line of reasoning followed by those who wanted Congress to keep Terri Schiavo on life support no matter what. While I can certainly respect that as a belief, it is clearly even more of a minority position than libertarianism. In addition, it requires strong-armed government intrusion over the wishes of patients or family; and it is totally unsustainable as national public policy.

All of this is complicated but surely, with a bit of listening, comprehensible to the average citizen. So how do we connect the reality of our dismal life-expectancy and health-cost statistics to the hysterical sobbing of people who come to town-hall meetings furious that "the insurance companies won't be able to make a profit"? Much of the epic woe is not about healthcare or public options. It's about roiling resentments that need to be dressed up as something else, the coded mummery of Halloween monsters hybridized into new chimeras of hate. It's about fear that precious resources are being transferred to "alien" others. Fear that the gains of others are ill-gotten, leaving the lonely patriot survivalist as victim, "thrown away," trash. In these fiery monologues, even our president is figured as conspiratorially alien-birthed, from a galaxy far, far away, who's just pretending to be one of "us."

This morning I saw a picture of President Obama dressed as Hitler, complete with little mustache, tacked high on a tree trunk. At first it seemed jaw-droppingly ridiculous, sociopathically paranoid. But if the rule of reversal is what's encoded in that image, all people of good will must worry that what's really at stake for some of our gun-toting, demagogic fellow citizens is nothing less than America's very own Weimar moment. ■

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Eric Alterman

Novak Without Tears

Journalist and television personality Robert Novak died August 18. I think it's time to do him the honor of taking his life's work seriously.

I got to know Novak a bit in the late 1980s while writing a magazine profile of him, and another of his then-colleague John McLaughlin while researching a book on the history of punditry. I found myself immune to Novak's charms—as he was to mine—but I don't begrudge the fact that many people in Washington did not. Novak was an extremely popular figure within the capital; and while I extend his close friends and family my sincere sympathy, as a historian of journalism I worry that his myriad personal connections may have the effect of obscuring the historical record with regard to his actions. With that in mind, here are a few aspects of Mr. Novak's career that have received short shrift during the past week:

§ While six journalists were approached by Bush officials to reveal Valerie Plame's identity as an undercover CIA agent, only Novak did so. This even though Bill Harlow, the agency's spokesman at the time, warned Novak, as he later testified, in the strongest possible terms that Plame's name should not be made public lest it endanger the operations and people with whom she had been secretly associated. Though Novak refused to admit it in public, he gave up his source almost immediately to Patrick Fitzgerald's investigation while other journalists—who did not out Plame—languished in jail and legal limbo. When, after the case ended, CNN finally prepared to ask Novak about his actions, he screamed "Bullshit!" on the air and stalked off the show before the questioning began. He never returned to the network that had paid him and promoted his analysis for more than two decades.

§ While Novak freely ignored the patriotic requests of his government when it suited him, he did not mind being used for the purpose of passing along its lies. During the Iran/Contra imbroglio, then–Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams lied to Novak about US involvement in Central America's civil wars, which paved the way for Abrams's criminal conviction for lying to Congress. Yet Novak told me at the time that he "admired" Abrams, who was "lying for reasons of state" while "a lot of people were out to get him." In another column, Novak admitted to lying to protect Watergate-era criminal Charles Colson in defense of Richard Nixon. Novak also burned sources when it suited his needs—as when he put their names in his 2007 memoir. So it should not have surprised his colleagues when he demanded that CBS News reveal the origin of George W. Bush's alleged draft record despite the network's pledge of secrecy to its sources.

§ Novak also ceaselessly promoted the lies of the "Swift Boat Veterans" about John Kerry, both on television and in an admiring review of their movement bible *Unfit for Command*. He did so without revealing that his son, Alex, was in charge of the book's publicity or that the book's publisher, Regnery, was owned by the very same person whose company, Eagle Publishing, distributes the $297-per-year "Evans-Novak Political Report."

§ Long before the *Washington Post* tried it, Novak profited personally by inviting high-profile sources to give off-the-record briefings to CEOs and wealthy individuals who paid exorbitant fees for the privilege of their presence. Journalists were barred from these meetings, which featured top government sources discussing the financial implications of their policy decisions.

§ Novak engaged in sexual as well as political McCarthyism. In one column, he and his partner, Rowland Evans, ominously referred to "the alleged homosexuality of one Democrat who might move up the succession ladder." The Republican National Committee was waging a parallel (and equally dishonest) whispering campaign against Tom Foley, the presumptive Speaker of the House, that relied heavily on phrases like "out of the liberal closet." When I asked Novak about this at the time, he went off the record to blame it entirely on Evans, insisting he had not even read the column before it appeared. He then went back on the record to defend the attack before returning to what was then his favorite topic: passing along rumors about John McLaughlin, then in the process of settling a sexual harassment claim by one of his young female underlings.

§ Novak, who converted from Judaism to Catholicism, hated Israel with a ferocity extremely rare in American public life. He titled one Bethlehem-based column "Worse Than Apartheid" and lauded Hamas leader Mahmoud Abu Hanoud as a "freedom fighter." Alone in the punditocracy, he promoted Louis Farrakhan. In December 2002 he wrote, "The greatest U.S. assistance to Israel would be to overthrow Saddam Hussein's Iraqi regime…and [this] is a major reason U.S. forces today are assembling for war." It should come as no surprise, given these views, that Novak was a supporter of Ron Paul's 2008 presidential candidacy.

I never got the chance to ask Novak about any of his recent actions. He dropped out of a joint C-SPAN appearance we had long scheduled, and when he learned he was to debate me at the University of California, Santa Barbara, during the Plame investigation, he withdrew at the last minute, causing the event's cancellation at considerable expense to our hosts, despite signed contracts and full payment made in advance. (The debate was eventually rescheduled with Tucker Carlson taking his place.)

Senator Jim DeMint, a Republican from South Carolina, says of Novak that this is a man who served as "a beacon of truth and light" in American politics. *The Weekly Standard*'s Fred Barnes adds, "It's not too much to call Novak journalism's last honest man in Washington." Forgive me, but I fear that statements like these say far more about the present moral and intellectual state of our insider Washington establishment than they do about the life and work of Robert Novak. ■

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WHAT THE PUBLIC DOESN'T KNOW ABOUT THE SECRET PROGRAM OF SPYING, ASSASSINATION AND TORTURE CONDUCTED BY THE US GOVERNMENT: AND HOW CONGRESS ONCE EXPOSED IT AND CAN INVESTIGATE IT AGAIN

BY CHRISTOPHER HAYES

It is now clear that we are facing an implacable enemy whose avowed objective is world domination by whatever means and at whatever cost. There are no rules in such a game. Hitherto acceptable norms of human conduct do not apply. If the United States is to survive, long-standing American concepts of "fair play" must be reconsidered.

Though these words echo his famous endorsement of working "the dark side" in order to triumph in the "war on terror," they were not, in fact, written by Dick Cheney. They come from the Doolittle Report, which was commissioned by President Eisenhower in 1954 to craft an intelligence strategy for winning the cold war. From a strategic perspective, the threat posed by global communism, headquartered in a massive, nuclear-armed superpower with almost 6 million men under arms, and Al Qaeda, a networked, globally distributed group of thousands of nonstate actors, could not be more different. But the national security state's understanding of each as an existential threat was, and continues to be, nearly identical. The enemy is ingenious, relentless and unencumbered by the procedural and moral niceties that hamstring the bureaucrats of a liberal democracy. Victory—indeed, survival—requires us to become more like them.

And so: the CIA contracted a Mafia boss to murder Fidel Castro, sent biotoxins to the Republic of Congo with orders to poison Patrice Lumumba and tested LSD on unsuspecting citizens (one of whom jumped out of a window to his death). It fomented coups and bloodshed against democratically elected governments, while the National Security Agency, in coordination with the major telegram companies, read every single telegram coming in or going out of the country for three decades. The FBI infiltrated peaceful antiwar groups, breaking up marriages of activists with forged evidence of infidelity, while surveilling civil rights leaders with an assortment of bugs and break-ins. It even attempted to blackmail Martin Luther King Jr. into committing suicide, shipping him tapes of him midcoitus with a mistress and a note that said, "There is but one way out for you. You better take it before your filthy, abnormal fraudulent self is bared to the nation."

We know all this (and much more) thanks to the work of the Church Committee. Chaired by Idaho Senator Frank Church in 1975–76, the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations With Respect to Intelligence Activities labored for sixteen months to produce a 5,000-page report that is a canonical history of the secret government. Over the past three decades the Church Committee has faded into relative obscurity. (I was somewhat surprised to discover how few people my age had heard of it.) But in the wake of further disclosures of crimes and abuses committed by the Bush administration and the escalating war of words between the CIA and Congress over just how much Congress knew about (and approved) these activities, the specter of the committee has begun to haunt Capitol Hill.

Mostly, the Church Committee is invoked by conservatives as a cautionary tale, a case of liberal overreach that handicapped the nation's intelligence operations for decades. Dick Cheney bemoaned the fact that his time as President Ford's chief of staff was "the low point" of presidential authority, thanks to a feckless Congress "all too often swayed by the public opinion of the moment."

But a growing chorus of voices, some of whom served on the original committee and some of whom currently occupy oversight positions in Congress, have begun to refer to the Church Committee as a model for the kind of sustained inquiry needed today. Congressman Rush Holt, a New Jersey Democrat, has served on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence since 2003. When I met him recently, his office had a table

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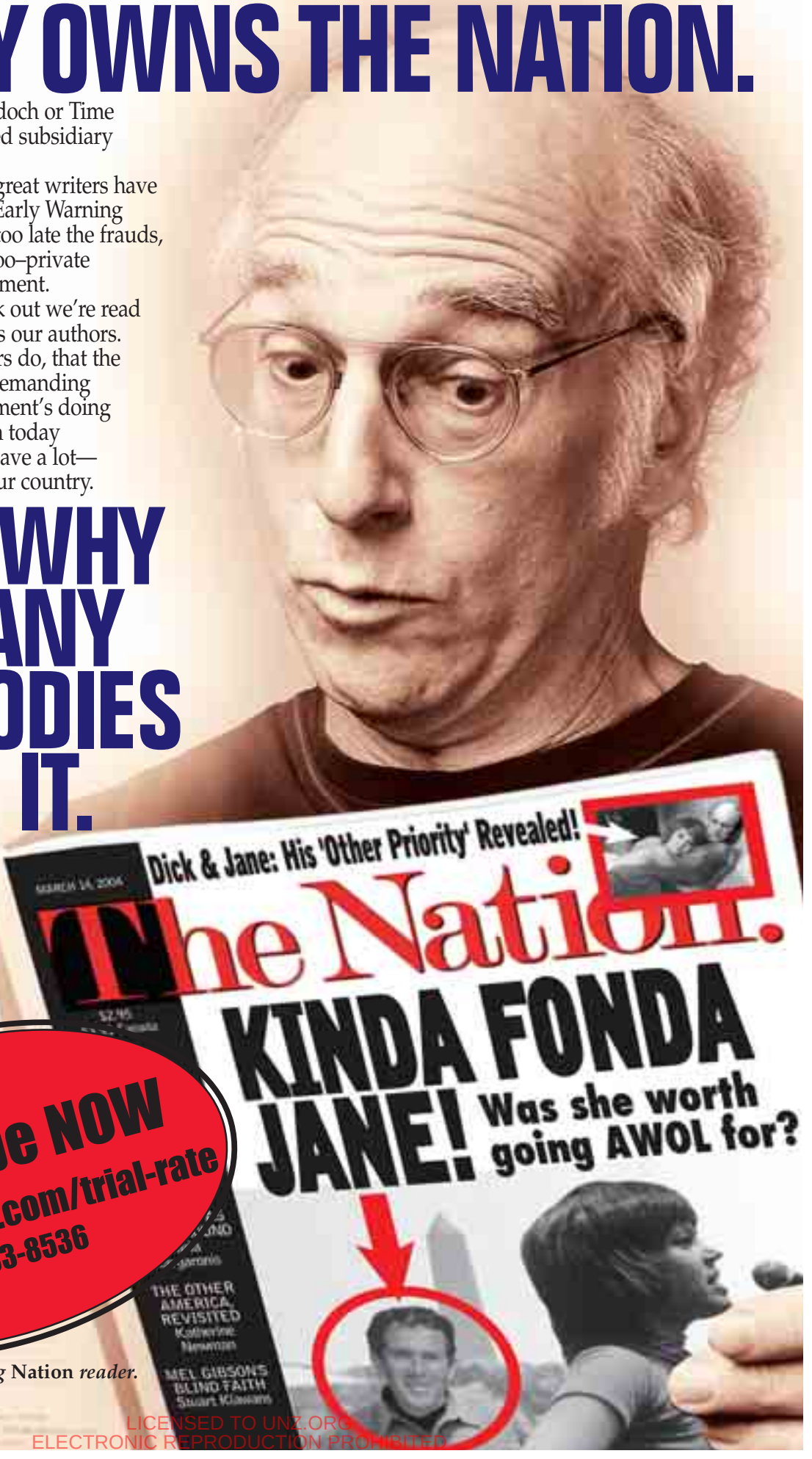
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full of books and papers about intelligence oversight and the Church Committee's legacy. "The intelligence community has not undergone comprehensive examination since then," he said, "and it needs it."

In a recent interview with the *Washington Independent*, former Senator Gary Hart, who served on the Church Committee, said there are "sufficient parallels" between the abuses of the cold war and those revealed in the past few years to "warrant a kind of sweeping investigation." Senators Pat Leahy and Russ Feingold have expressed support for a commission of inquiry. Even former White House counterterrorism czar Richard Clarke, who previously criticized the post-Church intelligence community's risk-averse ways, is on board. "In a democracy with Congressional oversight…when you've had this period where there appears to have been excesses, [where] there appears to have been illegality," he told me, "you need a comprehensive checkup."

The original Church Committee ushered in an era of reforms that we've come to take for granted: the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) courts and executive orders banning assassinations. But it's hard to survey the legal and moral wreckage of the "war on terror" and conclude that those reforms have stood the test of time. When the country faced another "implacable" enemy, the reforms of the Church Committee were subverted, circumvented, rolled back and outpaced.

To take just the most recent examples, press reports indicate that the CIA may have been training agents to conduct assassinations of Al Qaeda leaders during the first six months of the Obama administration, before either CIA director Leon Panetta or Congress was notified. What's more, according to reports in the *New York Times* and this magazine, the CIA outsourced parts of an assassination program to the private security firm Blackwater. As this article goes to press, Attorney General Eric Holder has appointed a special prosecutor, John Durham, to determine if a criminal investigation should go forward against CIA agents and contractors for torturing detainees. Durham's narrowly defined inquiry targets fewer than a dozen cases and falls far short of the "sweeping investigation" called for by Hart, Clarke and others.

Once again, it seems a comprehensive accounting is long overdue.

On December 22, 1974, the *New York Times* published an explosive front-page story by Seymour Hersh. Drawn from leaked portions of a 704-page internal CIA review of covert activities, known within the agency as "the family jewels," the article detailed the activities of a massive domestic spying program called Operation Chaos. "Huge CIA Operation Reported Against Antiwar Forces and Other Dissidents During the Nixon Years," read the headline.

The article created an uproar. In the wake of Watergate and the revelations of Nixon's recklessly lawless executive branch, the public was primed to think the worst. Church, a liberal, saw an opportunity to ferret out abuses, rein in an out-of-control intelligence apparatus and give himself a prime platform from which to run for president. He advocated for a special committee to investigate the activities of the various intelligence agencies. Senate Republicans objected, and the White House sought to cut off momentum by establishing its own commission of inquiry, chaired by Vice President Nelson Rockefeller. But the press didn't let up. Hersh published more startling revelations, and CBS's Daniel Schorr began airing reports of the CIA's involvement in international assassinations. For a nation that had suffered the traumatic deaths of JFK, RFK and MLK in the past dozen years, this was the last straw. "Murder," playwright Lillian Hellman wrote in a *New York Times* op-ed. "We didn't think of ourselves that way once upon a time."

On January 27, 1975, the Senate voted to create the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations With Respect to Intelligence Activities. (The committee also had a House counterpart, chaired by Otis Pike.) Each of its eleven members, six Democrats and five Republicans, appointed a staff liaison. The committee was given broad latitude, subpoena power and, crucially, a staff of 150. "We were in a huge auditorium in the new Senate office building," recalls Barbara Banoff, who joined the staff of the committee as a young attorney from New York. "They were just little cubicles with office dividers; if somebody was yelling at one place in the auditorium, everyone else could hear them."

In the wake of further disclosures of the Bush administration's abuses, the specter of the Church Committee has begun to haunt the Hill.

The staff was impressive. Chief counsel Frederick "Fritz" A.O. Schwarz was a top-flight litigator at a white-shoe New York firm. Other positions were filled by career intelligence officers, attorneys and academics. "I thought the committee was outstanding," says Loch Johnson, who served as Church's special assistant on the committee and now edits the journal *Intelligence and National Security*. "I was kind of amazed by that.… Usually in committees you get a hodgepodge.… Look at the résumés of the people: a lot of great attorneys and social scientists with well-regarded credentials."

Immediately, Schwarz says, it became apparent that the magnitude of the task before them was overwhelming. "We had to pick a few subjects and look at the subjects in real depth because if we didn't do that…there were so many things that were coming in as tips that we could never get any of them well."

The committee broke its staff up into task forces, each focusing on a discrete area, such as the CIA, assassinations and the FBI's domestic spying. Sensing the particularly acute outrage over revelations of the CIA's assassination plots, the committee worked hard to produce an interim report on the matter, which it released on November 20, 1975. It contained many of the more lurid examples of CIA high jinks—including plans to kill Castro with poisoned cigars—that would come to define the agency's image for an entire generation of Americans.

As the staff dug deeper, they came to realize that something was very rotten indeed at the heart of the national security state.

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"I think we were all shocked at the extent of the abuses of power by these agencies," says Johnson. "We had, of course, read Sy Hersh's piece. Cointelpro—that was not a part of Sy Hersh's article, and that was simply shocking. Not only did it involve domestic surveillance but domestic covert action. There were a number of things that were really eye-opening."

The committee's investigations had a radicalizing effect on even the top staffers like Schwarz and minority counsel Curtis Smothers. "As they were reading our reports," says Banoff, "we'd hear from Fritz, who had just read some draft report on some particularly outrageous misdeed: 'Goddamn it!' And he'd pound the desk. And then from Curtis: 'Those bastards!' Pound the desk. It was like a counterpuntal hymn."

Contrary to right-wing caricature, the committee was not staffed with crusading liberals. Indeed, almost every former staff member I interviewed made a point of emphasizing that the staff was not particularly ideological and operated without fear or favor. "The best thing they did," says Banoff, was "they didn't have separate majority and minority staff. I never got asked what party I belonged to, at all. That wasn't what Fritz was looking for. The staffs were integrated; we all worked together. We really did. We didn't have any obstructionism from a senator or a senator's designee."

Bill Bader, a former CIA analyst and naval intelligence officer chosen to run the committee's CIA task force, doesn't quite agree. "John Tower and Barry Goldwater [Republican senators on the committee] didn't think there should be anything at all," says Bader. "That was their whole view of the whole thing, and they made Church and [fellow committee member Walter] Mondale's life kind of miserable." That said, at the staff level Bader says his relationships inside the CIA helped a great deal. "But most of the analytical world was very happy for me to have that role because they knew me, because they knew I was fair, serious and I didn't have an ax to grind."

As the Church Committee's staff dug deep, they came to realize that something was very rotten at the heart of the national security state.

Particularly crucial was the reluctant compliance of CIA director William Colby. Colby's predecessor, Richard Helms, was of the old school: blatantly contemptuous of oversight of any kind. According to Bader, Helms felt that "this investigation was traitorous, pure and simple; you don't do things like that." Colby, on the other hand, was committed to reforming the agency and, some say, privately feared that if he fought Congress, there was a possibility it would try to get rid of the agency altogether.

Colby's attitude proved crucial to the committee's success. Though endowed with subpoena power, it had no enforcement capability to compel the Ford administration to turn over relevant documents, and at first the administration stonewalled. But the Church Committee benefited greatly from playing good cop to the House Pike Committee's bad cop, which quickly became embroiled in an escalating series of showdowns over testimony and disclosure, which Henry Kissinger also tried to stonewall. The Church Committee emerged as a kind of middle path—the sober, responsible investigators the administration could work with. "One of the reasons that the Senate committee got along well [with the White House]," says staff member Richard Betts, now a professor of political science at Columbia University, "is because [White House officials] were really pissed off at the Pike Committee, which they considered partisan and more flaky."

Committee investigators ultimately read through thousands of previously unreleased files. Without this access, the Church Committee couldn't have exposed what it did. Which prompts the question: were Congress to undertake a similar inquiry today, would the White House cooperate?

So far, the White House's record on disclosure has been disappointing. With the notable and admirable exception of its decision to release the Bush administration's Office of Legal Counsel's (OLC) memos authorizing torture, the Obama administration has largely continued to fight against disclosure of everything from photos of detainee abuse to even the most basic facts about the US detention center at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan. It has invoked the state secrets privilege in federal court to keep hidden details about the Bush administration's wiretapping program and what exactly happened to detainees at Guantánamo. (Full disclosure: my wife works in the White House counsel's office.)

In these and other cases, however, the White House is fighting outside groups like the ACLU, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, and the Electronic Frontier Foundation, which it can try to stonewall in the courts with relatively little press attention. In the case of Congressional subpoenas, it would be impossible to replicate that strategy without provoking a serious political outcry. Indeed, the partisan incentives in such a scenario may work in favor of disclosure. As unlikely as it may seem, Republicans on such a committee might find themselves zealously pursuing more disclosure. When the White House released the notorious OLC torture memos, Dick Cheney responded with an uncharacteristic push for more disclosure, arguing that releasing other documents would show the effectiveness of torture in foiling terror plots.

There was a somewhat similar dynamic in effect with the Church Committee, one that helped create momentum for greater levels of transparency. Since the committee began in the wake of Nixon's resignation and revelations about his deceptions, abuses and sociopathic pursuit of grudges, Church and many Democrats had every reason to believe they would be chiefly unmasking the full depths of Nixon's perfidy. Quickly, however, it became clear that Nixon was a difference in degree rather than a difference in kind. Kennedy and Johnson had, with J. Edgar Hoover, put in place many of the illegal policies and programs. Secret documents obtained by the committee even revealed that the sainted FDR had ordered IRS audits of his political enemies. Republicans on the committee, then, had as much incentive to dig up the truth as did their Democratic counterparts.

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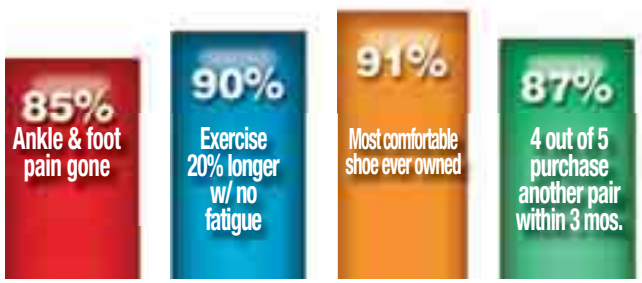

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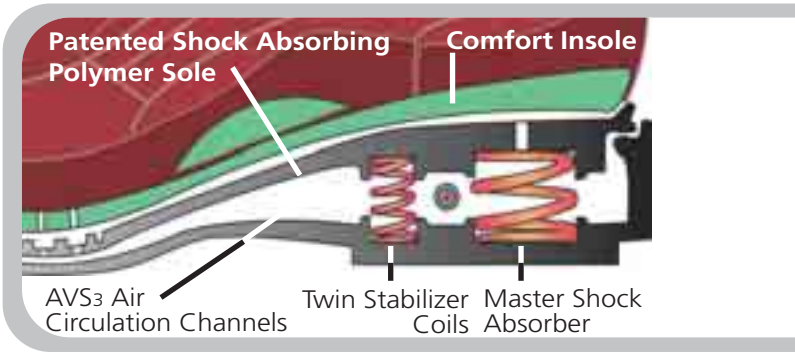

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As historian Kathy Olmsted argues in her book *Challenging the Secret Government*, Church was never quite able to part with this conception of good Democrats/bad Republicans. Confronted with misdeeds under Kennedy and Johnson, he chose to view the CIA as a rogue agency, as opposed to one executing the president's wishes. This characterization became the fulcrum of debate within the committee. At one point Church referred to the CIA as a "rogue elephant," causing a media firestorm. But the final committee report shows that to the degree the agency and other parts of the secret government were operating with limited control from the White House, it was by design. Walter Mondale came around to the view that the problem wasn't the agencies themselves but the accretion of secret executive power: "the grant of powers to the CIA and to these other agencies," he said during a committee hearing, "is, above all, a grant of power to the president."

A contemporary Church Committee would do well to follow Mondale's approach and not Church's. It must comprehensively evaluate the secret government, its activities and its relationship to Congress stretching back through several decades of Democratic and Republican administrations. Such a broad scope would insulate the committee from charges that it was simply pursuing a partisan vendetta against a discredited Republican administration, but it is also necessary to understand the systemic problems and necessary reforms.

It's possible that under sustained scrutiny the sharp division between the Bush administration and its predecessors will begin to blur.

Michael Scheuer, former head of the CIA's Osama bin Laden unit and author of several books sharply critical of Bush's management of the "war on terror," says he would be "happy" to testify before such a committee to explain the rendition program he designed and supervised under Clinton. That program allowed the United States to capture wanted terrorists and send them back to other countries to face prosecution and, in some cases, likely torture and mistreatment. It was this program that would come to serve as the foundation for the Bush policy of "extraordinary rendition," which amounted to the extralegal disappearing of suspected terrorists around the world.

We don't know much about what other secret programs Clinton and other former presidents implemented, but it's possible that under sustained scrutiny the sharp division between the Bush administration and its predecessors will begin to blur.

The Church Committee's final report was released on April 26, 1976, in six books. Its recommendations laid the groundwork for a series of reforms that more or less constitute the current architecture of intelligence oversight. Before the Church Committee, there was no stand-alone intelligence committee overseeing the executive. Whatever communication there was between the two branches of government was decidedly one-way. "[CIA director] Allen Dulles would come up himself to the Hill," Bill Bader told me, "not to a committee room. And he would sit down with [lawmakers] out in the Congressional corridors and whisper things into their ears and say, Can't tell anyone about them. And then he would go back up to the CIA."

In 1976 the Senate created the Select Committee on Intelligence, and the House followed suit with its own Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence a year later. Also in 1976 President Ford signed Executive Order 11905, which flatly stated, "No employee of the United States Government shall engage in, or conspire to engage in, political assassination." Two years later, Congress passed and President Carter signed FISA, which provided clear procedures for covert action, surveillance and oversight. The law created the special FISA court, which grants warrants for wiretapping and surveillance of anyone on American soil as well as Americans abroad. The Church Committee's revelations also had a profound effect on the bureaucratic culture of the CIA, NSA and FBI. At all three agencies, internal legal controls were put in place requiring layers of attorneys to sign off on any possibly questionable activities.

But for all these needed reforms, it's impossible to look at the past eight years and conclude they were sufficient. If cold war presidents were surreptitious and/or cavalier about the lawlessness of their actions, the Bush administration perfected a kind of perverse legalism, using sympathetic lawyers to decree legal that which was manifestly illegal. It was an ingeniously devious approach. By relying on John Yoo, a loyal ideologue inside the OLC, Cheney et al. were able to perform an end run around the extensive legal checks and restraints created precisely as a response to the Church Committee's findings. Indeed, the reason the infamous OLC memos are so garishly specific is that CIA lawyers, still operating with a memory of the Church Committee, were insistent on obtaining explicit sign-off for every action and technique that they (quite rightly) believed to be of dubious legality.

Similarly, Congressional oversight proved no match for a determined executive. Many critics from across the ideological spectrum, from Clarke to Scheuer, note that this is at least partly because Congress often would rather not know what is going on behind the curtain. But the controversy over just what House Speaker Nancy Pelosi knew about the CIA's use of torture, and when she knew it, underscores how dysfunctional the notification system has become. Created as part of the Intelligence Oversight Act of 1980, the so-called Gang of Eight system allows a president, under emergency circumstances, to restrict briefings on covert activities to the leader of each party in both houses and the top member of each party of the House and Senate intelligence committees. What was intended as a limited briefing to be given only temporarily during crises has emerged, instead, as the standard.

Clarke explained its shortcomings to me this way: "Essentially what happens, you're a member of the Gang of Eight. You get a phone call: 'We have to come and brief you.' They ask you to go to the vault. They brief you. You can't take notes, you can't have your staff there and you can't tell anybody." In addition, each member is briefed separately and

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Fractal: An infinitely repeating pattern

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individually, so they can't even discuss the briefing and ask questions in a group setting. "That's oversight?" Clarke asks. "That's a pretense at oversight. That's a box check. The law required us to do that, and we did this."

That "box check" allowed the Bush administration to claim that Democrats in Congress signed off on many of the most obviously illegal programs, from warrantless wiretapping to torture. Democrats can counter that they were barred by law from acting on whatever they knew. In other words, both sides can claim they fulfilled their legal duties.

"One of the things that would be interesting for a modern version of the Church Committee," says Robert Borosage, who worked at the Center for National Security Studies to help publicize the original committee's findings, "was that they'd be forced to confront the fact that a lot of the reforms passed after the first one have failed. So the question becomes, What do we do now?"

The Church Committee wrenched an entire segment of the state into the light of day, bringing the world of intelligence into the public sphere.

While many of the legal and institutional reforms ushered in by the Church Committee have been degraded and evaded, I believe it would be a mistake to argue that the committee failed. Its most enduring legacy is the political and cultural understanding of the relationship between secrecy and abuse; it narrated a moral fable about absolute power corrupting absolutely.

Public debates over intelligence are qualitatively different from other policy discussions. In a debate over whether, say, the economic stimulus has been effective, there is a presumption that all participants are working from a common set of data—GDP growth, unemployment, government spending, etc.—but with different interpretations and emphases. Such is not the case when the issue is the effectiveness of intelligence programs or the scope of covert activities. Those debates are conducted on fundamentally unequal footing. Critics may charge that torture is counterproductive and produces bad intelligence, but defenders of the secret government can wave away such concerns by saying, more or less, You don't know what we know.

What the Church Committee did was to eliminate this inequality by wrenching an entire segment of the state into the light of day. It created a universally accepted set of facts, a canonical public record that turned the secret conversations of the powerful and initiated into the material for a broad debate. It brought the world of intelligence into the public sphere, the place where self-governance ought to take place.

Selling a contemporary inquiry modeled on the Church Committee won't be easy. Since the mid-1970s the right wing has crafted a deeply distorted but potent fable about its impact and legacy. The tale goes like this: the inquisition pursued by the Church Committee subjected intelligence agencies to scorn and burned the agents and analysts. "In the years that followed, it was extremely difficult to get FBI agents to volunteer for counterterrorism assignments," argued two ex-FBI officials in a March op-ed in the *Washington Times*. "The risk-avoidance culture and excessive restrictions on gathering intelligence that resulted from the Church hearings and other congressional attacks on the intelligence community were major factors in our failure to prevent the Sept. 11 attacks.… [A] new Church Committee-like public inquiry might easily have a similar chilling effect on our ability to recruit good people for future counterterrorism activities."

It's not hard to find lots of people within the intelligence community who will give you more or less the same line. Richard Clarke has little patience for it. "What bothers me," he says, "is the CIA's tendency whenever they're criticized to say, If you do your job, if you do oversight seriously—which Congress almost never does—then we'll pout. Some of us, many, will not just pout; we'll retire early. Our morale will be hurt." And if morale is hurt and the agencies are gutted, they argue, the country will be exposed to attack. In other words: "If you, Congress, do oversight, then we'll all die. Can you imagine FEMA or the agricultural department saying we're all going to retire if you conduct oversight?" Clarke asks in disbelief.

The principle of oversight aside, the right-wing story about the committee ruining intelligence capabilities for a generation posits a golden age of über-competent intelligence-gathering that simply never existed. The activities described in the committee report, more often than not, have a kind of Keystone Kops flavor to them. "From its beginning," says Clarke, "when [the CIA] does covert action as opposed to clandestine activity… it regularly fucks up. I remember sitting with [Defense Secretary] Bob Gates when he was deputy national security adviser, and he said, I don't think CIA should do covert action; CIA ought to be an intelligence collection and analysis [agency]."

At the peak of its cold war powers, the American security apparatus was able to attain all kinds of information about the Russians (secret information that KGB files have subsequently shown the Russians knew we knew) but was unable to learn the most basic facts about "the enemy." We failed to anticipate the invasion of Afghanistan and routinely overestimated the strength of the Soviet economy. Indeed, the failure to understand and foresee the internal pressures on the Soviet Union may be the greatest failure of US cold war intelligence, one that had absolutely nothing to do with the Church Committee and its aftermath.

In his insightful 1998 book *Secrecy*, neocon patron saint Daniel Patrick Moynihan argues that by cordoning off discrete pieces of information, secrecy actually impedes intelligence-gathering rather than facilitates it. "Secrecy is for losers," Moynihan concludes. "For people who don't know how important information really is. The Soviet Union realized this too late.… It is time to dismantle government secrecy, this most pervasive of Cold War-era regulations."

It's hard to imagine that the White House would be enthusiastic about such an undertaking. Obama has insisted, routinely, unwaveringly, that he is "more interested in looking forward

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than…in looking backwards." At one level this seems a shocking abrogation of the executive branch's chief constitutional responsibility, to "take care that the laws be faithfully executed." But presumably the thinking goes something like this: the president has a limited amount of political capital, and he can spend it on major, once-in-a-generation reforms of the American social contract—universal healthcare and cap and trade—or he can spend it pursuing justice for the perpetrators of the previous administration's crimes. As morally worthy as the latter might be, it won't get anyone healthcare or stop the planet from melting; it won't provide a new foundation for progressive governance.

But as self-consciously pragmatic as this posture is, it's proving wildly impractical to implement. The reason is that the White House has limited control over when and what is revealed about crimes and misdeeds of the Bush years, and every time a new revelation hits the papers, such as the recent disclosures of Blackwater's involvement with the CIA assassination unit and interrogators' use of "mock executions," it dominates the news cycle. Since the White House itself has defined such revelations as a "distraction," every time they are in the news it is, by its own definition, distracted.

The benefit of a new Church Committee would be that it would corral these "distractions" into a coherent undertaking, initiated in Congress, within a fixed time period. It would also provide a framework for systematic investigation of the policies rather than selective prosecutions of those at the bottom of the hierarchy who carried them out.

"Because try as Obama [may] to avoid investigations and looking backwards, he's being dragged into it over and over again," says Clarke. "It would be better for him if Congress just said, You know, Barack, we're just gonna provide these wise men, give them subpoena authority. It's not on you, Barack. There was this excess and that excess and a pattern of excesses, and you know, it clears the air.… Now you have the impression that there's a bunch of stinking turds under the rug."

Perhaps the greatest argument for such an undertaking is the simplest: citizens have a right to know what crimes have been committed in their names. Many of the relevant and damning facts have already been conclusively established. We know we waterboarded Abu Zubaydah, a borderline mentally ill member of the Al Qaeda entourage, 183 times in one month. We know the NSA spied on an untold number of Americans without warrants. We know that the CIA sent captured detainees to the custody of regimes with abysmal human rights records, with the explicit understanding they would be tortured.

The Church Committee came at a time when the public was in the midst of a wrenching (and necessary) loss of innocence. But in our age, secret government crimes and plots are almost a cliché. Polling shows trust in government has returned roughly to its mid-'70s nadir. The danger now isn't naïveté but cynicism—that we just come to accept that the government will commit crimes in our name under the cover of secrecy and that such activities are more or less business as usual, about which nothing can be done. But something can be done. Something must be done. And Congress should do it. ■

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Shotgun Adoption

Christian agencies lavish support services on pregnant women—if they give up their babies.

by KATHRYN JOYCE

Carol Jordan, a 32-year-old pharmacy technician, was living in Greenville, South Carolina, in 1999 when she became pregnant. She'd already decided against abortion, but she was struggling financially and her boyfriend was unsupportive. Looking through the Yellow Pages for help, she spotted an ad under "crisis pregnancies" for Bethany Christian Services. Within hours of calling, Jordan (who asked to be identified with a pseudonym) was invited to Bethany's local office to discuss free housing and medical care.

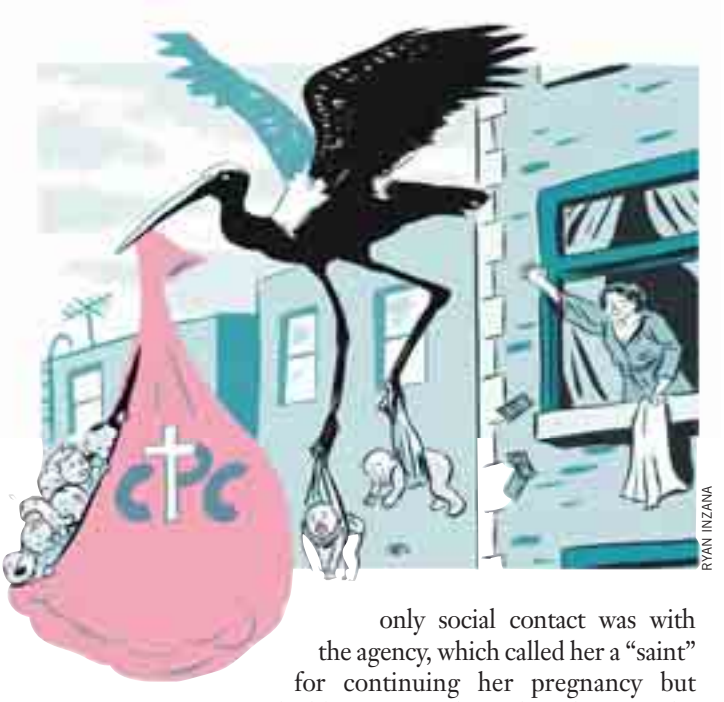
Bethany, it turned out, did not simply specialize in counseling pregnant women. It is the nation's largest adoption agency, with more than eighty-five offices in fifteen countries.

When Jordan arrived, a counselor began asking whether she'd considered adoption and talking about the poverty rates of single mothers. Over five counseling sessions, she convinced Jordan that adoption was a win-win situation: Jordan wouldn't "have death on her hands," her bills would be paid and the baby would go to a family of her choosing in an open adoption. She suggested Jordan move into one of Bethany's "shepherding family" homes, away from the influence of family and friends.

Crisis pregnancy centers (CPCs), the nonprofit pregnancy-testing facilities set up by antiabortion groups to dissuade women from having abortions, have become fixtures of the antiabortion landscape, buttressed by an estimated $60 million in federal abstinence and marriage-promotion funds. The National Abortion Federation estimates that as many as 4,000 CPCs operate in the United States, often using deceptive tactics like posing as abortion providers and showing women graphic antiabortion films. While there is growing awareness of how CPCs hinder abortion access, the centers have a broader agenda that is less well known: they seek not only to induce women to "choose life" but to choose adoption, either by offering adoption services themselves, as in Bethany's case, or by referring women to Christian adoption agencies. Far more than other adoption agencies, conservative Christian agencies demonstrate a pattern and history of coercing women to relinquish their children.

Bethany guided Jordan through the Medicaid application process and in April moved her in with home-schooling parents outside Myrtle Beach. There, according to Jordan, the family referred to her as one of the agency's "birth mothers"—a term adoption agencies use for relinquishing mothers that many adoption reform advocates reject—although she hadn't yet agreed to adoption. "I felt like a walking uterus for the agency," says Jordan.

Jordan was isolated in the shepherding family's house; her only social contact was with the agency, which called her a "saint" for continuing her pregnancy but asked her to consider "what's best for the baby." "They come on really prolife: look at the baby, look at its heartbeat, don't kill it. Then, once you say you won't kill it, they ask, What can you give it? You have nothing to offer, but here's a family that goes on a cruise every year."



RYAN INZANA

Jordan was given scrapbooks full of letters and photos from hopeful adoptive parents hoping to stand out among the estimated 150 couples for every available baby. Today the "birthmother letters" are on Bethany's website: 500 couples who pay $14,500 to $25,500 for a domestic infant adoption, vying for mothers' attention with profuse praise of their "selflessness" and descriptions of the lifestyle they can offer.

Jordan selected a couple, and when she went into labor, they attended the birth, along with her counselor and shepherding mother. The next day, the counselor said that fully open adoptions weren't legal in South Carolina, so Jordan wouldn't receive identifying information on the adoptive parents. Jordan cried all day and didn't think she could relinquish the baby. She called her shepherding parents and asked if she could bring the baby home. They refused, chastising Jordan sharply. The counselor told the couple Jordan was having second thoughts and brought them, sobbing, into her recovery room. The counselor warned Jordan that if she persisted, she'd end up homeless and lose the baby anyway.

"My options were to leave the hospital walking, with no money," says Jordan. "Or here's a couple with Pottery Barn furniture. You sacrifice yourself, not knowing it will leave an impact on you and your child for life."

The next morning, Jordan was rushed through signing relin-

Kathryn Joyce is the author of Quiverfull: Inside the Christian Patriarchy Movement. *Research support was provided by the Puffin Foundation Investigative Fund at The Nation Institute.*

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quishment papers by a busy, on-duty nurse serving as notary public. As soon as she'd signed, the couple left with the baby, and Jordan was taken home without being discharged. The shepherding family was celebrating and asked why Jordan wouldn't stop crying. Five days later, she used her last $50 to buy a Greyhound ticket to Greenville, where she struggled for weeks to reach a Bethany post-adoption counselor as her milk came in and she rapidly lost more than fifty pounds in her grief.

When Jordan called Bethany's statewide headquarters one night, her shepherding mother answered, responding coldly to Jordan's lament. "You're the one who spread your legs and got pregnant out of wedlock," she told Jordan. "You have no right to grieve for this baby."

Jordan isn't alone. On an adoption agency rating website, Bethany is ranked poorly by birth mothers. Its adoptive parent ratings are higher, although several adopters described the coercion they felt "our birth mother" underwent. But neither is Bethany alone; in the constellation of groups that constitute the Christian adoption industry, including CPCs, maternity homes and adoption agencies, Bethany is just one large star. And instances of coercion in adoption stretch back nearly seventy years.

With adoption hailed as part of a common-ground truce in the abortion wars, the link with antiabortion groups is often overlooked.

Ann Fessler, author of *The Girls Who Went Away: The Hidden History of Women Who Surrendered Children for Adoption in the Decades Before Roe v. Wade*, has meticulously chronicled the lives of women from the "Baby Scoop Era": the period from 1945 to 1973, when single motherhood was so stigmatized that at least 1.5 million unwed American mothers relinquished children for adoption, often after finishing pregnancies secretly in maternity homes. The coercion was frequently brutal, entailing severe isolation, shaming, withholding information about labor, disallowing mothers to see their babies and coercing relinquishment signatures while women were drugged or misled about their rights. Often, women's names were changed or abbreviated, to bolster a sense that "the person who went away to deliver the baby was someone else" and that mothers would later forget about the babies they had given up. In taking oral histories from more than a hundred Baby Scoop Era mothers, Fessler found that not only was that untrue but most mothers suffered lifelong guilt and depression.

The cultural shift that had followed World War II switched the emphasis of adoption from finding homes for needy infants to finding children for childless couples. Karen Wilson-Buterbaugh, founder of the Baby Scoop Era Research Initiative, has compiled sociological studies from the era, including Clark Vincent's speculation in his 1961 book *Unmarried Mothers* that "if the demand for adoptable babies continues to exceed the supply…it is quite possible that, in the near future, unwed mothers will be 'punished' by having their children taken from them right after birth"—under the guise of protecting the "best interests of the child."

The Baby Scoop Era ended with *Roe v. Wade*, as abortion was legalized and single motherhood gained acceptance. The resultant fall in adoption rates was drastic, from 19.2 percent of white, unmarried pregnant women in 1972 to 1.7 percent in 1995 (and lower among women of color). Coinciding with this decline was the rise of the religious right and the founding of crisis pregnancy centers.

In 1984 Leslee Unruh, founder of Abstinence Clearinghouse, established a CPC in South Dakota called the Alpha Center. The first center had opened in 1967, but in 1984 Unruh's CPC was still a relatively new idea. In 1987 the state attorney's office investigated complaints that Unruh had offered young women money to carry their pregnancies to term and then relinquish their babies for adoption.

"There were so many allegations about improper adoptions being made and how teenage girls were being pressured to give up their children," then–state attorney Tim Wilka told the *Argus Leader*, that the governor asked him to take the case. The Alpha Center pleaded no contest to five counts of unlicensed adoption and foster care practices; nineteen other charges were dropped, including four felonies. But where Unruh left off, many CPCs and antiabortion groups have taken up in her place.

It's logical that antiabortion organizations seeking to prevent abortions and promote traditional family structures would aggressively promote adoption, but this connection is often overlooked in the bipartisan support that adoption promotion enjoys as part of a common-ground truce in the abortion wars. In President Obama's speech at Notre Dame, he suggested that one solution to lowering abortion rates is "making adoption more available." And in a recent online debate, *Slate* columnist William Saletan and Beliefnet editor Steven Waldman proposed that unmarried women be offered a nominal cash payment to choose adoption over abortion as a compromise between prochoice and prolife convictions.

Compared with pre-*Roe* days, today women with unplanned pregnancies have access to far more information about their alternatives. However, Fessler says, they frequently encounter CPCs that pressure them to give the child to a family with better resources. "Part of the big picture for a young woman who's pregnant," she says, "is that there are people holding out their hand, but the price of admission is giving up your child. If you decide to keep your child, it's as if you're lost in the system, whereas people fight over you if you're ready to surrender. There's an organization motivated by a cause and profit. It's a pretty high price to pay: give away your first-born, and we'll take care of you for six months."

Christian adoption agencies court pregnant women through often unenforceable promises of open adoption and the option to choose the adoptive parents. California's Lifetime Adoption Foundation even offers birth mothers college scholarships. Additionally, maternity homes have made a comeback in recent years, with one network of 1,100 CPCs and homes, Heartbeat International, identifying at least 300 homes in the United

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States. Some advertise almost luxurious living facilities, though others, notes Jessica DelBalzo, founder of an anti-adoption group, Adoption: Legalized Lies, continue to "bill themselves as homes for wayward girls who need to be set straight."

Most homes are religiously affiliated, and almost all promote adoption. Many, like Christian Homes and Family Services (CHFS), reserve their beds for women planning adoption. Others keep only a fraction for women choosing to parent. Most homes seamlessly blend their advertised crisis pregnancy counseling with domestic and international adoption services, and oppose unmarried parenthood as against "God's plan for the family."

Religious women may be particularly susceptible to CPC coercion, argues Mari Gallion, a 39-year-old Alaska mother who founded the support group SinglePregnancy.com after a CPC unsuccessfully pressured her to relinquish her child ten years ago. Gallion, who has worked with nearly 3,000 women with unplanned pregnancies, calls CPCs "adoption rings" with a multistep agenda: evangelizing; discovering and exploiting women's insecurities about age, finances or parenting; then hard-selling adoption, portraying parenting as a selfish, immature choice. "The women who are easier to coerce in these situations are those who subscribe to conservative Christian views," says Gallion. "They'll come in and be told that, You've done wrong, but God will forgive you if you do the right thing."

Critics describe how biological parents are coercively separated from their offspring, producing 'orphans' for Christian parents to adopt.

Mirah Riben, vice president of communications for the birth mother group Origins-USA, as well as author of *The Stork Market: America's Multi-Billion Dollar Unregulated Adoption Industry*, says that many mothers struggle for decades with the fallout of "a brainwashing process" that persuades them to choose adoption and often deny for years—or until their adoptions become closed—that they were pressured into it. "I see a lot of justification among the young mothers. If their adoption is remaining open, they need to be compliant, good birth mothers and toe the line. They can't afford to be angry or bitter, because if they are, the door will close and they won't see the kid."

Such was the case for Karen Fetrow, a Pennsylvania mother who relinquished her son in 1994 through a Bethany office outside Harrisburg. Fetrow, a formerly pro-adoption evangelical, sought out a Christian agency when she became pregnant at 24. Although Fetrow was in a committed relationship with the father, now her husband of sixteen years, Bethany told her that women who sought to parent were on their own.

After Fetrow relinquished her son, she says she received no counseling from Bethany beyond one checkup phone call. Three months later, Bethany called to notify her that her legal paperwork was en route but that she shouldn't read it or attend court for the adoption finalization. "I didn't know that the adoption wasn't final and that I had three months to change my mind," says Fetrow. "The reality was that if I had gone, I might have changed my mind—and they didn't want me to."

Although for thirteen years Fetrow couldn't look at an infant without crying, she continued to support adoption and CPCs. But when she sought counseling—a staple of Bethany's advertised services—the director of her local office said he couldn't help. When her son turned 5, she stopped receiving updates from his adoptive parents, although she'd expected they would continue until he was 18. She asked Bethany about it, and the agency stalled for three years before explaining that the adoptive parents had only agreed to five years of updates. Fetrow complained on Bethany's online forum and was banned from the site.

Kris Faasse, director of adoption services at Bethany, said that while she was unaware of Fetrow's and Jordan's particular stories, their accounts are painful for her to hear. "The fact that this happens to any mom grieves me and would not be how we wanted to handle it." She added that only 25–40 percent of women who come to Bethany choose adoption, which, she said, "is so important, because we never want a woman to feel coerced into a plan."

Shortly after Fetrow was banned from Bethany's forum, the local Bethany office attempted to host a service at her church, "painting adoption as a Christian, prolife thing." At a friend's urging, Fetrow told her pastor about her experience, and after a meeting with the Bethany director—who called Fetrow angry and bitter—the pastor refused to let Bethany address the congregation. But Fetrow's pastor seems an exception.

In recent years, the antiabortion push for adoption has been taken up as a broader evangelical cause. In 2007 Focus on the Family hosted an Evangelical Orphan Care and Adoption Summit in Colorado Springs. Ryan Dobson, the adopted son of Focus founder James Dobson, has campaigned on behalf of CHFS and Unruh's Alpha Center. Last year 600 church and ministry leaders gathered in Florida to promote adoption through the Christian Alliance for Orphans. And a recent book in the idiosyncratic genre of prolife fiction, *The River Nile*, exalted a clinic that tricked abortion-seeking women into adoption instead.

Such enthusiasm for Christians to adopt en masse begins to seem like a demand in need of greater supply, and this is how critics of current practices describe it: as an industry that coercively separates willing biological parents from their offspring, artificially producing "orphans" for Christian parents to adopt, rather than helping birth parents care for wanted children.

In 1994 the *Village Voice* investigated several California CPCs in Care Net, the largest network of centers in the country, and found gross ethical violations at an affiliated adoption agency, where director Bonnie Jo Williams secured adoptions by warning pregnant women about parenthood's painfulness, pressuring them to sign papers under heavy medication and in one case detaining a woman in labor for four hours in a CPC.

There were nineteen lawsuits against CPCs between 1983 and 1996, but coercive practices persist. Joe Soll, a psycho-

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therapist and adoption reform activist, says that CPCs "funnel people to adoption agencies who put them in maternity homes," where ambivalent mothers are subjected to moralistic and financial pressure: warned that if they don't give up their babies, they'll have to pay for their spot at the home, and given conflicted legal counsel from agency-retained lawyers. Watchdog group Crisis Pregnancy Center Watch described an Indiana woman misled into delaying an abortion past her state's legal window and subsequently pressured into adoption.

Literature from CPCs indicates their efforts to raise adoption rates. In 2000 the Family Research Council (FRC), the political arm of Focus on the Family, commissioned a study on the dearth of adoptable babies being produced by CPCs, "The Missing Piece: Adoption Counseling in Pregnancy Resource Centers," written by the Rev. Curtis Young, former director of Care Net.

Young based the report on the market research of consultant Charles Kenny, who questioned women with unplanned pregnancies and Christian CPC counselors to identify obstacles to higher adoption rates. Young argued that mothers' likelihood to choose adoption was based on their level of maturity and selflessness, with "more mature respondents…able to feel they are nurturing not only their children, but also, the adoptive parents," and "less mature women" disregarding the baby's needs by seeking to parent. He wrote that CPCs might persuade reluctant women by casting adoption as redemption for unwed mothers' "past failures" and a triumph over "selfishness, an 'evil' within themselves." Though Young noted that some CPCs were wary of looking like "baby sellers," he nonetheless urged close alliances with adoption agencies to ensure that the path to adoption was "as seamless and streamlined as possible."

Young was speaking to a larger audience than the FRC faithful. Care Net runs 1,160 CPCs nationwide and partners with Heartbeat International to host a national CPC hot line. Kenny is tied to the cause as a "Bronze"-level benefactor of the National Council for Adoption (NCFA), the most prominent adoption lobby group in the country; Texas maternity home giant Gladney; the Good Shepherd Sisters, a Catholic order serving "young women of dissolute habits"; and the Mormon adoption agency LDS Family Services.

The federally funded NCFA has a large role in spreading teachings like these through its Infant Adoption Awareness Training Program, a Department of Health and Human Services initiative it helped pass in 2000 that has promoted adoption to nearly 18,000 CPC, school, state, health and correctional workers since 2002. Although the program stipulates "nondirective counseling for pregnant women," it was developed by a heavily pro-adoption pool of experts, including Kenny, and the Guttmacher Institute reports that trainees have complained about the program's coercive nature.

In 2007 the FRC and NCFA went beyond overlapping mandates to collaborate on the publication of another pamphlet, written by Kenny, "Birthmother, Goodmother: Her Story of Heroic Redemption," which targets "potential birthmothers" before pregnancy: a seeming contradiction of abstinence promotion, unless, as DelBalzo wryly notes, the abstinence movement intends to create "more babies available for adoption."

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Wednesday, September 23, 7:00PM

COURTESY JOHN FILO

Dan Rather, former anchor for CBS Evening News; managing editor and anchor of *Dan Rather Reports*

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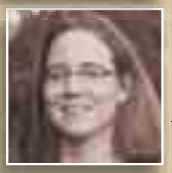

Marcy Wheeler, a pioneering blogger and Hillman Award winner, writes for Firedoglake.com and is the author of *Anatomy of Deceit*.

moderated by Victor Navasky

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Even as women have gained better reproductive healthcare access, adoption laws have become less favorable for birth mothers, advancing the time after birth when a mother can relinquish—in some states now within twenty-four hours—and cutting the period to revoke consent drastically or completely. Adoption organizations have published comparative lists of state laws, almost as a catalog for prospective adopters seeking states that restrict birth parent rights. Among the worst is Utah.

Jo Anne Swanson, a court-appointed adoption intermediary, has studied a number of cases in which women have been lured out of their home states to give birth and surrender their children under Utah's lax laws—which require only two witnesses for relinquishments that have occurred in hotel rooms or parks—to avoid interstate child-placement regulations. Some women who changed their minds had agencies refuse them airfare home. And one Utah couple, Steve and Carolyn Mintz, told the *Salt Lake Tribune* that the director of their adoption agency flew into a rage at a mother in labor who'd backed out of their adoption, and the mother and her infant ended up in a Salt Lake City homeless shelter. Many complaints have been lodged by birth fathers who sought to parent their children but were disenfranchised by Utah's complicated system of registering paternity.

Utah isn't alone in attacking birth fathers' rights. From 2000 to 2001, a Midwestern grandmother named Ann Gregory (a pseudonym) fought doggedly for her son, a military enlistee, to retain parental rights over his and his girlfriend's child. When the girlfriend became pregnant, her conservative evangelical parents brought her to a local CPC affiliated with their megachurch. The CPC was located in the same office as an adoption agency: its "sister organization" of eighteen years. The CPC called Gregory's son, who was splitting his time between home and boot camp, pressuring him to "be supportive" of his girlfriend by signing adoption papers. The agency also called Gregory and her ex-husband, quoting Scripture "about how we're all adopted children of Jesus Christ."

What followed, Gregory says, was "six weeks of pure hell," as she felt her son and his girlfriend were "brainwashed" into adoption. She researched coercive adoption and retained a lawyer for her son. When the mother delivered, the attorney had Gregory notify a hospital social worker that parental rights were being contested, so the baby wouldn't be relinquished. Two days later, as the adoption agency was en route to take custody, Gregory filed an emergency restraining order. The matter had to be settled in court, where Gregory's son refused to consent to adoption. The legal bill for two weeks came to $9,000.

Both parents went to college, and though they are no longer together, Gregory praises their cooperation in jointly raising their son, now 8. But she is shaken by what it took to prevail. "You've got to get on it before the child is born, and you'd better have $10,000 sitting around. I can't even imagine how they treat those in a worse position than us. They say they want to help people in a crisis pregnancy, but really they want to help themselves to a baby."

"A lot of those moms from the '50s and '60s were really damaged by losing their child through the maternity homes," says Gregory. "People say those kinds of things don't happen anymore. But they do. It's just not a maternity home on every corner; it's a CPC." ■

Letters

(continued from page 2)

spoke in a mocking, singsong voice and patted his heart for emphasis.

It was one of those private moments, before the camera rolls, when you get a rare glimpse into someone's character and it's even darker than you ever dreamed.

STEPHEN TALBOT

NEW YORK CITY

Robert McNamara's recent death at 93 reminded me of Michael Kinsley's observation in *The New Yorker* that he had managed to live more than four times longer than the typical soldier who didn't make it home.

I served as an Army medic from July 1970 to May 1971. Like everyone else who made it back, my greatest regret will always be the loss of the citizens and soldiers who weren't as lucky as me. Close behind that regret, though, is that everything we gave to the war did far more harm than good for Vietnam. I hope with all my heart that the soldiers in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan do not end up with the same realization about their military experiences that I had about mine.

EDWARD C. STREETER

Politics & Faith

WASHINGTON, D.C.

The Nation has a distinguished history of producing journalism that debunks conventional wisdom. In "Obama's Faithful Flock" [August 3/10], however, Sarah Posner perpetuates a distorted narrative about the role of faith in politics while commenting on Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good.

Catholics in Alliance promotes progressive, faith-based messages on economic justice, healthcare, immigration and labor rights that provide a strategic alternative to the narrow agenda of the religious right. Posner relies on specious attacks against our organization and caricatures the alliance because part of our social justice mission includes addressing abortion and supporting growing efforts in Congress to find common ground on this divisive issue.

Stereotyping religious Americans and making abortion a litmus test for entry into the progressive community only emboldens far-right ideologues who believe they have a monopoly on moral values. We expect more from *The Nation* and secular leaders in the progressive movement.

FRED ROTONDARO, *board chair*
Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good

Love & Marriage

HARPERSFIELD, N.Y.

Re Katha Pollitt's "Can This Marriage Be Saved?" ["Subject to Debate," August 3/10]: As a therapist, I sometimes wonder if the divorce rate is too low. I've seen so many people scarred by being brought up in bad marriages. Interestingly, the worst damage seems to be done by marriages where the surface is calm and polite. Hidden hatred and empty marriages are profoundly corrosive.

RICHARD MULLIKEN

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Books & the Arts.

A Music of Austerity

by JAMES LONGENBACH

In the fall of 1936, after a decade of not doing so, this magazine sponsored a poetry prize. Of the 1,800 poems submitted, said the editors of *The Nation*, "the overwhelming majority were concerned with contemporary social conflicts either at home or abroad." The winning poem, Wallace Stevens's "The Men That Are Falling," was an elegy for soldiers recently killed in the Spanish Civil War, which reads, in part:

> Taste of the blood upon his
> martyred lips,
> O pensioners, O demagogues and
> pay-men!
>
> This death was his belief though
> death is a stone,
> This man loved earth, not heaven,
> enough to die.

These stand among the most uncharacteristic lines that Stevens ever published. Coming upon them in the elegantly compressed compass of the new *Selected Poems*, it's difficult to imagine that the author of a quietly unnerving pentameter like "The river that flows nowhere, like a sea" could have written the line "Taste of the blood upon his martyred lips."

Yet to read "The Men That Are Falling" beside some of the greatest poems of the twentieth century—"The Snow Man," "A Postcard From the Volcano," "The River of Rivers in Connecticut"—is to be forced to rearticulate the extremely complex terms of Stevens's achievement. Stevens stands simultaneously among the most worldly and the most otherworldly of American poets, and it is paradoxically through his otherworldliness—through poems whose plainspoken diction feels spooky—that his respect for the actual world is registered. What is uncharacteristic about "The Men That Are Falling" is not the desire to write about a controversial war; Stevens often did that. What distinguishes the poem is the unconvincingly urgent rhetoric in which that desire is registered.

James Longenbach's new book of poems, The Iron Key, *will be published by Norton next year.*

Stevens was born in Reading, Pennsylvania, in 1879. After attending Harvard College and New York Law School, he began working in the insurance industry in 1908. He quickly became one of the country's foremost experts in surety law, and in 1934 he was named vice president of the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company. "The truth is that we may well be entering an insurance era," he wrote in "Insurance and Social Change," published in 1937, the year in which the first Social Security benefits were paid. Surveying the nationalized insurance schemes of Italy, Germany and Britain, Stevens tried to convince his colleagues that the Social Security Administration posed no threat to their business or their personal lives.

Other great modern American poets had full-time jobs. Marianne Moore was an editor, William Carlos Williams a doctor, T.S. Eliot a banker (and later an editor). What distinguishes Stevens is that he never gave the impression of feeling any tension between the different aspects of his life. Once he quipped that "money is a kind of poetry," but more often he emphasized that his legal work was in no way poetic, just as his poems were not meaningfully involved with the logics of law or economics. In an essay called "Surety and Fidelity Claims," he even admitted that his work would seem tedious to almost anyone: "You sign a lot of drafts. You see surprisingly few people. You do the greater part of your work either in your own office or in lawyers' offices. You don't even see the country; you see law offices and hotel rooms." Unlike Ezra Pound, who was an amateur economist, Stevens had a professional's sense of the limitations of expertise. He resembles in this regard George Oppen, who stopped writing poetry for over twenty years in order to devote himself to personal and social problems that poetry did not have the power to ameliorate, however implicated in such problems poetry might have been.

SYLVIA SALMI

Wallace Stevens
Selected Poems.
Edited by John N. Serio.
Knopf. 327 pp. $30.

Stevens also experienced extended periods of silence. At Harvard he was the president of *The Advocate*, a prestigious literary magazine; he exchanged sonnets with the philosopher George Santayana, for whom he would later write "To an Old Philosopher in Rome." But after leaving Cambridge in 1900, he wrote no poems for almost a decade. And when the magisterial "Sunday Morning" appeared in 1915, in *Poetry* magazine, it seemed to have come from nowhere; almost no apprentice work preceded it.

Stevens's first book, *Harmonium*, appeared eight years later, when the poet was 44, and it is still the most astonishing debut in the history of American poetry. In contrast, the poems in Pound's *A Lume Spento* or Williams's *Poems* barely let us glimpse the great work to come. But after publishing

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Harmonium, Stevens gave up poetry for another decade. His daughter, Holly, was born. "My job is not now with poets from Paris," he told Williams, who was a close friend. "It is to keep the fire-place burning and the music-box churning and the wheels of the baby's chariot turning."

Anyone who cared about American poetry presumed that Stevens's career as a poet was finished, but then "The Idea of Order at Key West" suddenly appeared in 1934. Beginning at age 55, Stevens finally assumed the profile of a poet, and the great books of his maturity (*Ideas of Order*, *The Man With the Blue Guitar*, *Parts of a World*, *Transport to Summer* and *The Auroras of Autumn*) were published at regular intervals. He continued working at the Hartford until well after the age of mandatory retirement; he declined an invitation to be the Charles Eliot Norton Professor of Poetry at Harvard. Shortly before his death in 1955, his *Collected Poems* received both the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize.

One of his last poems was "The River of Rivers in Connecticut":

> There is a great river this side of Stygia,
> Before one comes to the first black cataracts
> And trees that lack the intelligence of trees.
>
> In that river, far this side of Stygia,
> The mere flowing of the water is a gayety,
> Flashing and flashing in the sun. On its banks,
>
> No shadow walks. The river is fateful,
> Like the last one. But there is no ferryman.
> He could not bend against its propelling force.
>
> It is not to be seen beneath the appearances
> That tell of it. The steeple at Farmington
> Stands glistening and Haddam shines and sways.
>
> It is the third commonness with light and air,
> A curriculum, a vigor, a local abstraction…
> Call it, once more, a river, an unnamed flowing,
>
> Space-filled, reflecting the seasons, the folk-lore
> Of each of the senses; call it, again and again,
> The river that flows nowhere, like a sea.

The river of rivers feels mythic, as momentous as the river that separates us from the afterlife. But this decidedly earthly river is not crossed only once; we need no ferryman, no Charon, to carry us over. The river is fateful because every moment of human life is fateful. It flows through the familiar towns of Haddam and Farmington, its water flashes in the sun. It is an emblem of our mortality, an endless flowing, but more important it embodies a sweet acceptance of oblivion: the river carries us nowhere, not like the sea but like a sea—like any sea at all.

Stevens once remarked that while we possess the great poems of heaven and hell, the great poems of the earth remain to be written. Both "The River of Rivers in Connecticut" and "The Men That Are Falling" are products of Stevens's lifelong ambition to write such poems—poems that honor mortality without needing to look beyond it. But even as "The Men That Are Falling" disdains the extremities of heaven and hell, it embraces earth in a language of fitful extremity: "This death was his belief though death is a stone,/This man loved earth, not heaven, enough to die." In contrast, the consolation of "The River of Rivers in Connecticut" feels enticingly complex because the poem's diction is so eerily generalized, its syntax so quietly declarative. The poem's celebration of human limitation would not feel convincing if its tone did not make small means feel magical.

This tone is Stevens's great achievement, his most enduring response to the world. Some poems seem relevant because of what they say, because of their subject matter. But all poems are truly relevant, whatever they say, because their manner of saying seduces us to inhabit the poem's language as if it were our own—despite the fact that any great poet's language is witheringly idiosyncratic. We feel, reading a great poem, that a small corner of the soul has for a moment become public property. Stevens describes this feeling with uncanny abruptness in "The House Was Quiet and the World Was Calm," a poem that makes the act of reading and the act of writing feel indistinguishable: "The reader became the book."

Stevens first became himself in one of the earliest poems reprinted in the *Selected Poems*. "The Death of a Soldier" was written in response to the letters of Eugène Lemer-

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cier, a French soldier who was killed in World War I, but it feels as if the poem could be about anyone.

> Death is absolute and without memorial,
> As in a season of autumn,
> When the wind stops,
>
> When the wind stops and, over the heavens,
> The clouds go, nevertheless,
> In their direction.

The cycles of the natural world cannot stop to record Lemercier's death; the clouds go nevertheless in their direction, which can't be specified, because it's theirs, not ours. For Stevens, there is immense consolation in this disregard for an individual human life—an assurance that the natural world will prevail despite the human appetite for destruction. The language of Stevens's most characteristic poetry partakes, in small ways, of this consolation: "The Death of a Soldier" does not mention Lemercier, who has already disappeared.

Stevens did not always write with the incandescent plainness that distinguishes poems from "The Death of a Soldier" to "The River of Rivers in Connecticut." Sometimes he is a poet of extravagant verbal energy, a show-off who indulges in lines like "Chieftain Iffucan of Azcan in caftan/Of tan with henna hackles, halt!" And sometimes he is more celebrated for such showiness than for the austerity that more truly becomes him. Stevens himself thought that the interplay of plainness and fanciness (or what he called reality and imagination) was central to his work, and he placed a programmatic account of this interplay at the center of "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," a long poem that asks to be treated as a masterpiece:

> Two things of opposite natures seem to depend
> On one another, as a man depends
> On a woman, day on night, the imagined
>
> On the real. This is the origin of change.

"Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction" is an enactment of this notion; the poem oscillates between an imperative to perceive the world plainly and a complementary imperative to imagine the world extravagantly. We need continually to create "fictions" that explain our world, and we need, as our world changes, to wipe such fictions away, returning to a plain sense of things that is itself an imaginative achievement. "In the absence of a belief in God," said Stevens in one of his most willed moments of self-confidence, "the mind turns to its own creations and examines them, not alone from the aesthetic point of view, but for what they reveal, for what they validate and invalidate."

This quasi-philosophical aspect of Stevens seemed very attractive in the later decades of the twentieth century, especially after the death of Eliot, whose Christianity sometimes inflected the academic critical establishment that championed his poems. Today this aspect of Stevens feels threadbare—as if the professional lawyer came to imagine that he was also a professional philosopher. I don't find what Stevens called his "reality-imagination complex" very engaging, and neither does John Serio, who says in his introduction to the *Selected Poems* that while many of the longer poems "do spur us intellectually," they "may not move us emotionally." Serio sees Stevens primarily as a lyric poet, and while he has excluded some of the longer poems from his selection ("Extracts From Addresses to the Academy of Fine Ideas," "Examination of the Hero in a Time of War," "The Pure Good of Theory"), I have trouble imagining the house growing quiet enough for even a devoted reader of "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction" to become the book.

At issue here is not a preference for shorter poems; at issue is the particular kind of language that most authentically constitutes Stevens's gift.

> Clear water in a brilliant bowl,
> Pink and white carnations. The light
> In the room more like a snowy air,
> Reflecting snow. A newly-fallen snow
> At the end of winter when afternoons return.
> Pink and white carnations—one desires
> So much more than that.

This opening stanza of "The Poems of Our Climate" begins in an idiom that mirrors the stillness of the scene described, but when Stevens says that one desires "so much more" than an arrangement of pink and white carnations, the poem takes a peculiar turn. I'm convinced that Stevens thought he should desire more, but I'm not sure he actually did. His deepest inclination was (to quote the one phrase in the poetry that sounds like it was written by an insurance executive) to remain "within what we permit." So when Stevens reaches for sensual exuberance ("Chieftain Iffucan of Azcan in caftan") or passionate commitment ("Taste of the blood upon his martyred lips") or philosophical profundity ("Two things of opposite natures seem to depend/On one another"), the language often seems willed, as if the poet were embarrassed by his own taste for deprivation. "Is it bad to have come here/And to have found the bed empty?" asks Stevens in a little poem called "Gallant Château." The answer, undeflected by the wish to be different from oneself, is "It is good."

In the poems that matter most, this question needs neither to be asked nor answered: the language carries its own conviction. Early Stevens—"The Snow Man":

> One must have a mind of winter
> To regard the frost and the boughs
> Of the pine-trees crusted with snow.

Midcareer Stevens—"The Man With the Blue Guitar":

> It is the sea that whitens the roof.
> The sea drifts through the winter air.
>
> It is the sea that the north wind makes.
> The sea is in the falling snow.

Late Stevens—"The Course of a Particular":

> Today the leaves cry, hanging on branches swept by wind,
> Yet the nothingness of winter becomes a little less.
> It is still full of icy shades and shapen snow.

These poems, like any of Stevens's best poems, make deprivation feel seductively like plenitude.

All the best poems are preserved in this collection, a culling that is considerably more severe than that of the selected volume it supersedes, *The Palm at the End of the Mind*, edited by Holly Stevens and published in 1972. The whole of Stevens is represented here—the plain, the fancy, the philosophical—but the latter two categories have been pruned, affording the best of Stevens more prominence. This winnowing is over time inevitable (nobody reads the whole of Wordsworth or Tennyson), and I would go further: it's hard to imagine a need to reinhabit "Description Without Place" ("It is possible that to seem—it is to be") or "Late Hymn From the Myrrh-Mountain" ("Unsnack your snood, madanna"). Without the distraction

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of this willed language, the greatest of Stevens's poems, the movingly stark poems written during the last five years of his life, stand out even more vividly as the culmination of his career:

> No soldiers in the scenery,
> No thoughts of people now dead,
> As they were fifty years ago:
> Young and living in a live air,
> Young and walking in the sunshine,
> Bending in blue dresses to touch
> something—
> Today the mind is not part of the
> weather.

Some readers might prefer the fanciful or the philosophical; others might argue that austerity cannot fully exist without its complements. But when we hear the sound of Stevens in poems by subsequent poets, it is most often the music of austerity, at once worldly and otherworldly, that we hear. Mark Strand: "From the shadow of domes in the city of domes,/A snowflake, a blizzard of one, weightless, entered your room." Louise Glück: "I can't hear your voice/for the wind's cries, whistling over the bare ground." Donald Justice: "In a hotel room by the sea, the Master/Sits brooding." Carl Phillips: "The wind's pattern was its own, and the water's also." To say that these lines are indebted to Stevens is like saying that fish are indebted to water: the sound of Stevens has entered the sound of poetry in the language. ■

COURTESY THE ARTIST AND MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK CITY AND PARIS

Detail from *Homes for America* (1966–67), by Dan Graham

Beyond Exhaustion

by BARRY SCHWABSKY

Over the past several years, the Whitney Museum has organized with the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, a sequence of important retrospectives of artists who emerged in New York City in the mid- to late '60s, just after the Minimalists. Robert Smithson was the subject of the first exhibition, in 2005; then Gordon Matta-Clark and Lawrence Weiner had shows in 2007. Each was in its own way a triumph. Arguably, this generation of artists born around 1940 (and of course they flourished not only in New York) represents at once the culmination and the exhaustion of a certain Modernist project as it had played out over the preceding century. In their work, formal reflexivity and self-critique reached degree zero; in an ultimate turn of the screw of abstraction, the art object dissolved into language and action.

Now it's the turn of another of their cohort, Dan Graham. The choice must have seemed a no-brainer. After all, Graham is something of a cult figure, especially among younger artists, perhaps because he has dabbled in many of the major artistic issues of the time, above all the relation of the artwork to its social context. And he seems to have garnered an ineffable aura of cool, in part because of his association with rock music—writing and making videos about it but also palling around with musicians (the Whitney catalog includes an interview with Graham by Kim Gordon, the Sonic Youth bassist who is widely recognized as one of the coolest people in the universe). Graham is, as the exhibition's co-curator Bennett Simpson writes (in an essay focusing precisely on Graham and music), something of an artist's artist.

So I can't help but feel that I'm about to blackball myself from some invisible club when I say that, in contrast to the three shows I mentioned before, each of which I walked out of having discovered an even richer and deeper *oeuvre* than the one I already admired, "Dan Graham: Beyond" left me disillusioned. (Curated by Simpson and Chrissie Iles, the show is on view at the Whitney through October 11, after which it travels to the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, October 31–January 31.) Graham's work turns out to be mostly a period piece—the product of a brilliant dilettante who was, at least for a while, so in step with the zeitgeist that he sometimes appeared to be a stride or two ahead of it, an illusion that lent his work the appearance of an originality or strength it lacked. If you read the interviews with Graham in the exhibition catalog, it's fascinating how often he still speaks not on behalf of himself but of the group to which he felt he belonged, articulating a shared sensibility expressed as a series of likes and dislikes. "We hated Duchamp." "We loved Speer at that time"—referring to the Nazi architect. "We were all very influenced by Jean-Luc Godard." "We were very influenced by the French new novel, and the idea was not to use metaphor." Much of the exhibition feels like an anthology of illustrations of what a certain "we" found interesting in the late '60s.

Graham started out not as an artist but as a 22-year-old wunderkind gallery owner. He sold nothing, but in less than a year in business on East Sixty-fourth Street he managed to latch on to some of the best new work of the moment by the likes of Sol LeWitt, Dan Flavin and Donald Judd. The downside of his curatorial flair may be reflected in the fact that every issue he took

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Barry Schwabsky, an American art critic and poet living in London, recently published Book Left Open in the Rain *(Black Square Editions/The Brooklyn Rail).*

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up as an artist was developed more lucidly and with greater intensity by one or another of his contemporaries. His earliest efforts, formally self-reflexive work with language verging on concrete poetry, are all too successfully featureless and nondescript—arid and dutiful compared with text pieces by artists such as Carl Andre and Vito Acconci. His use of magazine pages as a medium—the great calling card for his first phase as an artist, thanks to the fame of his 1966–67 work *Homes for America*—is neither as coherent nor as surprising as that of Mel Bochner or Robert Smithson, whose collaboration *The Domain of the Great Bear*, which inaugurated this genre, was published shortly before *Homes for America*. And for that matter, his fascination with suburban American housing, not only in *Homes for America* but in a work like *Alteration to a Suburban House* (1978/92), seems halfhearted when compared with Matta-Clark's furious engagement.

Graham's use of performance as recorded, at first on film, then on video, to examine embodied phenomenology recalls a host of artists at the time, among them Acconci, Joan Jonas and Bruce Nauman. Starting at the end of the '70s, and increasingly in the following decade, Graham's interest in the feedback between body and environment, behavior and context, led to a form of art that seems halfway between sculpture and architecture—"pavilions," as he calls them, metal constructions with walls of glass and in particular of two-way mirror glass. "It's about spectators observing themselves as they're observed by other people," Graham says. The notion is seductive, but in practice nothing much ever seems to come of it in his observation pavilions. People catch the idea of it and just move on. Graham's switch into architecture or something resembling it recalls, again, the trajectory of Vito Acconci—but Acconci's endeavors in this field have been far more playful, various and challenging.

From the beginning, Graham's core concept has been that the artist's task is to construct not a singularity but an empty structure—or "schema," as he calls it—that can be indifferently filled by whatever content. In its first instance, this took the form of a procedure for describing "a set of pages" of any kind whatsoever—generating a text with no other discernible content than "(Number of) adjectives," "(Number of) adverbs," "(Percentage of) area not occupied by type," "(Percentage of) area occupied by type" and so on alphabetically through "(Number of) words capitalized," "(Number of) words italicized," "(Number of) words not capitalized" and "(Number of) words not italicized." It's a kind of hyper-formalism—semiotic analysis as a Martian might perform it. If you believe that reading need not be pleasurable or enlightening, this text's for you.

What was brilliant about *Homes for America* was that Graham had found a schema that repeated itself at various levels, but with specific content as a structural linchpin. His photos of boxy tract houses in serried ranks, "designed," in the artist's word, "to fill in 'dead' land areas" with "no organic unity connecting the land site and the home," since they were simply "separate parts in a larger, predetermined, synthetic order," were echoed by the boxy, mechanical style of his layout—"insistently squared away," as Carter Ratcliff once described it—and then by the blank, listlike structure of the texts. These, in turn, echoed both the rectangular schemata of the underlying page design (which most designers try to overlay with something more organic and fluid rather than to emphasize) and the blunt, uningratiating aesthetic of minimalist structure. Here, Graham's schematic approach operates at a multitude of levels rather than reducing everything to zero.

Graham's performance-based work is a set of schemata too. The works have no predetermined content. They are open-ended structures meant to set up feedback loops between different people's behavior. Thus, as Graham says, in *Past Future Split Attention* (1972), "one person is describing the past of another person and that person is simultaneously talking about the future of the other person who's describing them." Watching the video record of one of these performances can be fascinating or boring or anything in between—it depends not so much on Graham's concept but on how "on" the particular performers happen to be in the moment. Graham's schemata in such pieces are rather like the improv exercises actors use to loosen up their approach to character; the interest of the result depends more on the actors than on the designer of the exercise. Or to put it a different way: such works seem designed to elicit unforeseen psychological or proprioceptive material from their performers—yet Graham never shows any particular interest in working with the material that arises, developing it from one piece to the next. It's there simply to "fill in 'dead' areas" in his schema.

Graham's pavilions can be seen as a form of display architecture in which the audi-

"We must count…"

We must count in Babylon.
Surely in Babylon we must count,

count the days and the dead,
the chambers of the palace,

its stones, its steps, its
flaring lamps, must count

the clouds, the petals of the flowers,
the hours, we must count the hours

as they pass
so slowly for the young,

so swiftly for the withered
masters of this place,

ardent assassins of speech
hidden away. Surely

in Babylon we must count
the gardens tended, the towers raised

by slaves in this city
soon to be dust, count

the days and the dead.
Must we count the dust?

MICHAEL PALMER

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ence itself is what's put on display. He is attempting to get the public to do what, earlier, he had depended on performers (among them, sometimes, himself) to do. "I thought the people themselves, the spectators, should be inside a showcase situation looking at themselves perceiving each other"—that was the thought behind *Public Space/Two Audiences*, which Graham presented at the 1976 Venice Biennale. It is simply a room divided in half by glass so that the people in each side function as moving images of each other. With the pavilions he developed this thought in free-standing constructions rather than adaptations of existing rooms—but likewise using the interplay of opacity, reflection and transparency to turn people into dreamlike apparitions for one another.

By now, Graham has made more than fifty pavilions, some of them adapted for particular uses (*Skateboard Pavilion*, 1989; *New Space for Showing Videos*, 1995; *Girls' Make-Up Room*, 1998–2000) but all essentially running through minor variations on the same scheme. Architectural historian Beatriz Colomina suggests seeing this "global army" of pavilions as "a single artwork, a single experiment," but the experiment has long since petered out. If Graham's earlier work was characterized by a nervous energy that impelled him to leave things half developed in order to try something new, the past quarter-century of his career has been devoted to dogged repetition. The fox has turned into a hedgehog. But in neither case has he deepened and explored his ideas; he has merely recycled them. That's probably another great source of his appeal to younger artists: his incompletely developed ideas are still available for their elaboration. And precisely because he realizes his ideas in such an offhand way ("I basically do fast sketches, fax them to my architects, we do a site visit, and then they bring one or two possibilities for glass"), he makes it all seem easy. But Graham's is not the deceptive simplicity that opens up to ever more unexpected implications. It's just facile thinking, and a formula for perpetuating a franchise.

X INITIATIVE/TOM POWEL IMAGING, INC., NEW YORK CITY

Bogman Palmjaguar (2007), a film by Luke Fowler, on view at X Initiative in New York City

Still, I'll bet that if you asked any of the three up-and-coming artists currently showing downtown at X Initiative what they think of Dan Graham, they'd tell you without giving it a moment's thought that he's a great artist. And yet at this moment, anyway, I think any one of them is more interesting than Graham—even the one whose work is the least developed, the youngest of them, Tris Vonna-Michell, an English artist born in 1982. At first glance, his exhibition consists mainly of a sparse array of tables with various objects on them, along with a couple of slide projectors; but at each station there's a set of headphones, and that's where the real action is, because Vonna-Michell isn't primarily an installation artist; he's someone who's perhaps too easily taken on, unexamined, the convention that an installation can be the remains of an event—not the schema but the debris it catches hold of.

But Vonna-Michell is really a performer—or, to be more specific, a talker. Put one of the headphones on and you'll find yourself in the midst of a not-quite-graspable narrative monologue. Part of Vonna-Michell's shtick is that his talks are supposed to have a predetermined duration—one that's always too short for the amount of material he has to convey. It's not clear what ratio of memorization to improvisation is involved, but the incredible rush of his seemingly free-associative verbiage is meant to sound almost out of control; there's something very seductive about the urgency with which he spits out his semicomprehensible, stuttering tales of, say, trying to explore the history of Berlin by way of its streets, subways and train stations. Yet I can't help but feel there's something too evasive here, for all the admirable formal reflexivity and multilayeredness of the artist's self-refractive tale-telling; a tale told very slowly might be all the more enigmatic than one that runs away from you as it runs away with its teller.

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Luke Fowler, born in Scotland in 1978, is one of a number of younger artists these days who are playing—I might even say toying—with the conventions of documentary film. Fowler has even set up a sort of movie theater in the middle of his space, with seats and everything, pretending to eschew the conventions of video installation even as he knows full well that building a cinema in the middle of an art gallery is just another way of making an installation. One film is a biography of an eccentric musician called Xentos Bentos. I took it as a parody documentary about an invented subject—not a hoax, because it was all too outrageous to be taken for real, but a pastiche. But second thoughts and an Internet search convince me that there really was a Xentos Bentos—although not much information is available about him and almost every occurrence of his name seems to be preceded by the word "mysterious." I still think the film is a parody—but the joke is all in the style; and the facts, after all, are probably straight-on. Stewart Home has called Fowler's style "a pop appropriation of underground film techniques," but the point seems to be that a ragged, *vérité* style in which no strong authorial viewpoint seems to be imposed on the material is just as artificial as any other. *Pilgrimage From Scattered Points* (2006) concerns the British avant-garde composer Cornelius Cardew, who started out as a follower of Karlheinz Stockhausen and ended as a Maoist proclaiming "Stockhausen serves imperialism." Made up mostly of period footage, the film has something of the ramshackle feeling of Cardew's efforts to make music democratically with amateur musicians—yet from a disillusioned perspective that recognizes both the inspirational and the absurd aspects of the composer's failed quest. The delicately maintained neutrality is almost dreamlike.

What Fowler does for documentary, the Berlin-based Israeli artist Keren Cytter does for nearly every film genre imaginable—tear-jerker, melodrama, sitcom, thriller, Bergmanesque spiritual self-examination, you name it. She takes them to pieces and examines the fragments with loving yet ironic fascination. Like Fowler, she treats the makeshift as a stylistic apparatus: "When I shake the camera I suppose you could say I'm trying to impress by consciously employing a 'homemade aesthetic,'" she once told an interviewer. Her medium is video, but she calls her works films; it's hard to think of anyone who's manifested quite as voracious an appetite for cinematic sensation since Graham's old favorite, the young Jean-Luc Godard. At X Initiative she has installed her work—in contrast to the seeming purity of Fowler's approach—as an "immersive experience," meaning that the films are placed and sequenced in such a way as to set the viewer into motion. As one film ends, you can hear but not see another one start up somewhere else in the space; by the time you've reached it, you've already missed the beginning—you're in media res. It works because the structure of the exhibition echoes that of the individual films, which also seem without clear beginning or end and repeatedly take the viewer by surprise with abrupt shifts that are no more predictable than the changes in direction of the path through a labyrinth in which one is lost—trapped as her characters are trapped in the stereotypical roles they've taken on.

X Initiative, by the way, is the building that used to be the Dia Foundation's exhibition space on West Twenty-second Street. It was home to some of the shows that linger most poignantly in my memory from the period between the late '80s and the beginning of the present decade, among them impeccable, long-running presentations of artists like Robert Ryman (1988–89), Lawrence Weiner (1991–92), Jessica Stockholder (1995–96) and Fred Sandback (1996–98). Since 2004 the building has been empty; now a group spearheaded by gallerist Elizabeth Dee has the use of it for a year. What they're making of it has not gone without criticism; in *New York* magazine, Jerry Saltz called its first round of shows, which I missed, "a bit dry (and too close to Dee's exhibition program: She has shown two of the three artists)." Of this second round, it has been widely noted that all three artists were also just included in the New Museum's "The Generational: Younger Than Jesus." Since X Initiative director Cecilia Alemani is the girlfriend of New Museum curator Massimiliano Gioni, it's hard not to feel that an organization that idealistically calls itself "an initiative of the global art community, with a goal to inspire and challenge us to think about new possibilities for experiencing and producing contemporary art" has an exceedingly narrow, if not parochial, sense of the global. But the fact remains that X Initiative has done a great service by enabling these three artists to present their work on a scale far beyond what a commercial gallery could house or a museum could justify. For the year, at least, New York City has a *Kunsthalle* big enough to suit it. ■

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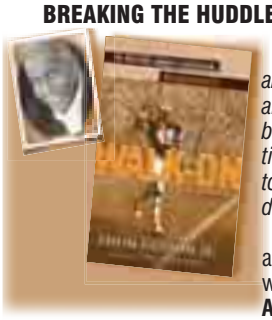

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BACK TALK

ADRIAN BELLESGUARD

Jarvis Cocker

Jarvis Cocker, the former frontman of the Brit-pop band Pulp, recently released his second solo album, *Further Complications* (Rough Trade; $21.45). In May he spent a week with his band working in an art gallery in Paris, trying to answer the question, What is music? —*Christine Smallwood*

So: what is music?

That's a tall order, really. I was investigating what music can be. Now that it's no longer a supposedly viable commercial venture, would the gallery system be a valid way of disseminating it? That sounds very dry and academic, but it isn't. We set up in this small gallery space and rehearsed, and every now and again we'd have hours where people would bring an instrument and play along, and then we provided the music to different classes, like a yoga class and a belly-dancing class. What I liked was that there were spontaneous moments—the music happened for ten minutes or however long it took, and then it was gone. So many things in our culture are based around repetition and being relived, and it's nice to have something that comes out of nowhere and returns to nowhere.

How was it related to your work as a curator, like when you organized the Meltdown festival in London in 2007?

Meltdown was about the fact that culture isn't something you consume. You can create it yourself; you can participate in it. The gallery residency was a natural progression of that: people were invited to participate through playing with us onstage, or people who couldn't play an instrument could join one of the classes with our music. People have become spectators in their own life. The consumer ethos has infiltrated not just the way people live their lives but also the way they consume culture. I'm an old person, so I was brought up when punk rock happened, and the message was that you can do it yourself.

Have computer programs like GarageBand made DIY easier?

My son goes on my computer and writes, well, I couldn't really call them songs, but he makes music on that. It's weird because for him that's one of his first introductions to the world of making music, so he probably thinks that music comes ready-made in loop form. It's like taking bits off a shelf and then combining them in a strange way rather than making it up from scratch. That's inevitable because popular music has existed for more than fifty years. You can't start from scratch now. Anything you do in some way will involve recycling. But I do worry a little bit about the fact that instead of things being filtered through the human memory and getting changed—people have always tried to copy other things, but usually the filter of memory adds in discrepancies and sometimes you end up creating something new—now you just get the real thing and loop it, and that doesn't change it so much.

How has the Internet changed how we listen to music?

People don't know what bass is anymore. When you listen to sounds on a computer speaker, there are no bass frequencies whatsoever. As far as MP3 players go, music becomes a matter of quantity in some way. I think it's turned music listening into a bit like stamp collecting, because people want to fill up their iPod. I'm a musician. I've got a lot of records, and I've had a computer for ten years. Even though I put songs on my iPod, there are still only 2,200 tracks on it. And I'm not being lazy. I download things when I feel like it, and I put CDs in when I feel like it. So when people say they've got 15,000 or 30,000 tracks on their iPod, that's flabbergasting. They will have music on there that they still will not have listened to when they die. It's just stuck in a dusty part of a computer's hard drive. Or maybe it will get played once.

When I first got a computer, I put certain records on it, and then I realized I didn't want them on my computer. There are certain songs in your life that you don't want to come across on a shuffle. There are songs that you choose to listen to at certain points in your life, maybe a breakup song or a going-out song—you want to physically choose to play it. If it just turns up on a shuffle when you're halfway between Pittsburgh and LA, it's not appropriate. It might make you crash the car. I took certain songs off my iPod because I didn't want to stumble across them by accident. Others exist only on my iPod because they're a bit more wallpapery and appropriate for when I'm driving or traveling on an airplane. You adapt. Whenever anybody invents a new technology, they always say, This is it. But it isn't. OK, cassettes have been superseded. That's why I released one. Only 300 were made. It was a Rough Trade sampler.

What is it like to have such an acclaimed solo career relatively late in life?

Well, I'm lucky, aren't I? But I haven't started performing yet. It has crossed my mind that I've written quite a loud, fast record that may pose certain problems for me in performance. I do like to move around onstage. Perhaps I should have been doing some military-style training.

Do you ever download music illegally?

No. Never, never. I do think iTunes is a bit rubbish, because often it will have the crap version of the song you want. I was trying to get the original version of Jonathan Richman's "Roadrunner" the other day. On iTunes in the UK you can only get a live version or the John Cale version; you can't get Richman's actual studio version. It's irritating when that happens. And I can understand people illegally downloading things then. If you can't get the thing you want, you're within your rights. But generally speaking, I don't download things for free. ■

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Pattern Recognition

by AKIVA GOTTLIEB

A girl and a gun? An appreciation of Hollis Frampton's cinema begins with the admission that a film requires something far simpler than Jean-Luc Godard's basic recipe. Frampton, who died in 1984 at age 48, thought the perfect film would project a rectangle of white light. "But we have decided that we want to see *less* than this," says Frampton's narrator in his statement of principles/performance piece *A Lecture*. "Very well."

Frampton may have decided it was foolish (and, on a basic cognitive level, impossible) to deny audiences the familiar and expected pleasure of narrative—none of his films resemble that Platonic ideal of white light. *(nostalgia)*, his best-known film and a clear masterpiece, presents a familiar autobiographical scheme, as the narrator reminisces over a series of thirteen photographs. But the presentation is dissonant, and the viewer is only gradually taught how to watch the film. The photographs disintegrate into ashes on a hot plate, beginning with "the first photograph I ever made with the direct intention of making art" and ending with something that makes him believe "I shall never dare to make another photograph again." So explains the narrator, who in the first deliberate act of misdirection is not Frampton but his friend the Canadian filmmaker Michael Snow. (The voiceover gets exceedingly nested when Snow, narrating for Frampton, refers to Snow, saying with resignation, "I wish I could apologize to him.") He perpetually refers to the forthcoming photograph rather than the one smoldering before the viewer's eyes, creating a disjunction between sound and image. As soon as a new image appears, we are trying to reconcile it with the previous vignette while simultaneously listening to the narrator's recollections and regrets. In other words, we can't help but experience nostalgia. The result is alienating but rarely frustrating. *(nostalgia)* is a poignant depiction of the elusive nature of memory, even in an age of mechanical reproduction, as well as a deadpan prank. The critic Michael Joshua Rowin has referred to the film's final sequence—which hints at a terrifying mystery in the next photograph, one we will never see—as a three-minute retelling of Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blow-Up*.

On the Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters
The Writings of Hollis Frampton.
By Hollis Frampton.
Edited by Bruce Jenkins.
MIT. 360 pp. $39.95.

Frampton's passions and pranks are on full display in *On the Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters: The Writings of Hollis Frampton*, edited by Bruce Jenkins, a professor of film at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. A fitting tribute to the man J. Hoberman called "one of the most erudite characters to ever pick up a camera," the volume collects a number of theory-laden essays, propositions, blueprints, photographs, mental notes, angry letters to the editor and several misguided attempts at fiction. (Sample sentence: "That one was celebrated, before gravure, for an interminable concatenation of falsehoods about ruined architecture, lethal geography, and ritual mutilation, but exotic or poisonous wildlife was privileged to decorate a prose hospitable to vivid circumstance.") The book showcases Frampton the belletrist, Frampton the fabulist and, above all, Frampton the essentialist.

These Framptons often possessed the filmmaker simultaneously, and as a result his exhaustive catalog of the ramifications of celluloid art can seem cheeky. Tell me, is this reason, literature or parody?

> The sociable presentation of film, which is itself a ritual of the right of free assembly, produces some rather odd side effects. I calculated that in the small upstate town that I live a few miles from, one single screening of *Apocalypse Now* produced, among other apocalyptic figures, the use of approximately three hundred and ninety gallons of gasoline to take an audience of two hundred and fifty people to see it (this is one screening), about seven thousand road miles of travel for those people. If you translate that into the number of times that film will be screened before Francis Ford Coppola gets his money back (it's a process of infinite convergence, of course) and do the bookkeeping on it, you will cease to wonder why the petroleum industry or indeed the manufacturers of automobiles in Detroit seem to approve of the movies and indeed perhaps understand something of the not-very-secret affinities between those manufacturing processes. There are also, of course, movies that teach you how to drive automobiles, you understand, so there's some reciprocation there.

Blueprints and notations for experimental films are often as vibrant and disorienting as the films themselves, as anyone who's read through James O. Incandenza's annotated filmography in David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest* can attest. In fact, Incandenza's *The Joke*—in which the film's audience is filmed watching the film, which is itself a film of themselves watching the film; and then the audience members watch each other getting the film's "joke" "and become increasingly self-conscious and uncomfortable and hostile"—is described in the book as a "parody of Hollis Frampton's 'audience-specific events.'"

Along with the errata, *On the Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters* reprints Frampton's seminal but long-unavailable essay collection *Circles of Confusion*, divided evenly between logic-driven treatises on photography and cinema. *Circles* pointedly does not mention any of Frampton's films. He considered the essay collection a work of philosophy held completely apart from his cinematic endeavors. In it, he expresses kinship with the protean photographer Eadweard Muybridge, who conducted the experiments with animals in motion that provided a foundation for moving pictures. Addressing the pivotal moment of Muybridge's life—his murder of his wife's lover—Frampton finds the unfortunate root of the man's temporal obsession. "I submit that that brief and banal action, outside time, was the theme upon which he was forced to devise variations in such numbers that he finally exhausted, for himself, its significance. To bring back to equilibrium the energy generated in that instant required the work of half a lifetime."

By putting pen to paper, Frampton was also plotting a course to leave still photography behind. In an interview, he called his critical essay on Edward Weston "the ritual murder of the father." But he never treated cinema as the endpoint of still photography; nor did he see cinema as photography's fraternal twin. Instead, "they are both parts of something for which we do not have a name at the present time…which thing, once it is fully constituted, will I expect finally to constitute a kind of counter-machine

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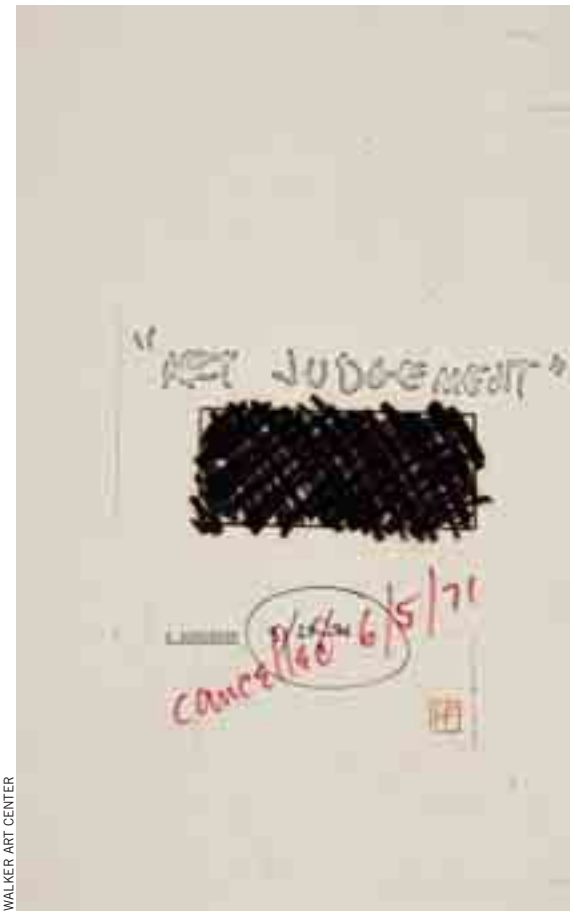
for the machine of language."

In "A Pentagram for Conjuring the Narrative," an essay both allusive and elusive, Frampton distills the work of master storytellers into mathematical formulas. Dissecting Beckett's *Malone Dies*, he finds that the title character's digressions lead us "back to the primal integer of Malone's consciousness." Frampton takes Joseph Conrad's formulation "He Was Born. He Suffered. He Died." and replaces the middle term—"He Suffered"—with "x." Gertrude Stein's work becomes x = x. Kipling is x = c–b/a. Don't even ask about Henry James. There's a whiff of nonsense about this whole enterprise, and Frampton concedes, thankfully, that "any discerning reader will be finding this a longwinded, pointless joke in poor taste." But Frampton is grasping at a serious, if oblique, line of inquiry: if everything is in flux, and a "thing" begins to seem like an impossible construction, then the best we can do is to seek out stable patterns of energy. A story, represented by the algebraic equation ax + b = c, is a stable pattern of energy.

Perhaps his most effective and challenging cinematic representation of this principle is *Zorns Lemma*, named after a proposition of set theory whereby "every partially ordered set contains a maximal fully ordered subset." The set in this case is the alphabet, and the film's central forty-minute sequence is composed of a series of wordless one-second shots, each one revealing a photographed sign that represents a letter of the alphabet. Gradually, as we are taken through this repeated pattern, letters begin to drop out of the sequence and are replaced by unrelated images (a fire, a bird flapping its wings, an ocean wave rolling backward) for the remainder of the film. *Zorns Lemma* is about replacing the X factor in a stable pattern of energy, and by extension telling a story.

The behavior of living, breathing people was never a burning concern of Frampton's cinematic counterparts—the structuralists Michael Snow, Ernie Gehr, Joyce Wieland and George Landow. Human passion can be so unruly, and Frampton's decision to engage with it, however abstractly, only underscores the diversity of his interests. Consider the recursive (and apparently autobiographical) *Critical Mass*, in which Frampton films a half-hour lovers' spat in front of a blank wall, looping the dialogue, repeating the end of the previous shot before cutting to the next one and throwing the characters' voices out of sync with the image. Frampton treats the argument as a performance and calls attention to the way that quarrels feed upon themselves. The viewer can choose an emotional side in the argument while admiring the filmmaker's construction of a closed circle.

A few months ago, the Anthology Film Archives in New York City screened Frampton's seven-part *Hapax Legomena* cycle—which includes *(nostalgia)* and *Critical Mass*. At the screening I attended, the projectionist announced that because of technical difficulties the films would be shown slightly out of sequence, and the section *Ordinary Matter* would play without sound. I decided to take the glitch as a sort of challenge, one that Frampton might have staged. In most cinemas, the person who leaves his seat when the film projector loses its focus or the sound cuts in and out, sacrificing a few nuggets of narrative in order to alert the projectionist, would be called a good Samaritan. But Frampton would likely pity this poor soul for turning his back on such a singular and fortuitous experience.



WALKER ART CENTER

A Reminder (1971), by Hollis Frampton, from the series *Reasonable Facsimiles*

The presentation that afternoon, with its unintentional do-it-yourself quality, made me wonder about how Frampton would navigate our contemporary remix culture and its methods of instantaneous transmission. How would the aesthete who at one point couldn't even bring himself to utter the word "video" deal with the fact that nearly every film I've mentioned is readily available for viewing on the Internet? (Frampton did speculate about the uses of video in an open-minded lecture called "The Withering Away of the State of Art," but he concluded that the medium was "too young…still too young.") His peers have already taken more-than-tentative steps into these murky waters: Jonas Mekas shot a 365-day video diary for Apple a few years ago. Ken Jacobs is taking apart old films with the spasmodic verve of a schoolboy—stretching, chopping and flipping the frame, using the tools of digital video (and 3-D!) to take us even deeper into the image. James Benning, always in thrall to the limitations of the 16-millimeter camera, has started shooting his enviro-structuralist epics on video. Even Hollywood auteurs like Coppola, David Lynch, Michael Mann and Steven Soderbergh have embraced the free-form digital era, vowing never to look back.

If the results of a "Hollis Frampton" search on YouTube are any indication, the man's blueprints and hypotheses will continue to yield fruit in video form. His films, even the ones that reflect a mathematical precision, are at heart "open-source" projects. "The metahistorian of cinema…is occupied with inventing a tradition, that is, a coherent, wieldy set of discrete monuments," Frampton once said. "Such works may not exist, and then it is his duty to make them. Or they may exist already.… And then he must remake them." Anyone with a series of old photographs, a few memories, a camera and a hot plate can remake *(nostalgia)*, and *Poetic Justice* could inspire a whole new generation of cash-strapped would-be Godards to write the words "a girl" and "a gun" on pieces of paper and start shooting. Frampton's original *(nostalgia)* certainly seems like a celluloid-specific endeavor: JPG and GIF files can't be grilled on a hot plate, after all. But digital images have their own temporal limitations and can disappear even more dramatically at the touch of the delete button. Maybe the digital adaptation of an existing film is the twenty-first-century equivalent of a filmed novel. If something gets lost in translation, we can call it a learning experience. ■

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■ September 17, 7 PM, Ethical Culture Society, Central Park West and Sixty-fourth Street, New York City. Featured speakers: Grace Lee Boggs, John Bellamy Foster, Fred Magdoff, Robert McChesney, Michael Tigar, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright; music by Toshi Reagon. Refreshments to follow. This is a once-in-a-decade opportunity for us to all get together, and we are looking forward to it eagerly. Visit monthlyreview.org or call (212) 691-2555 for details.

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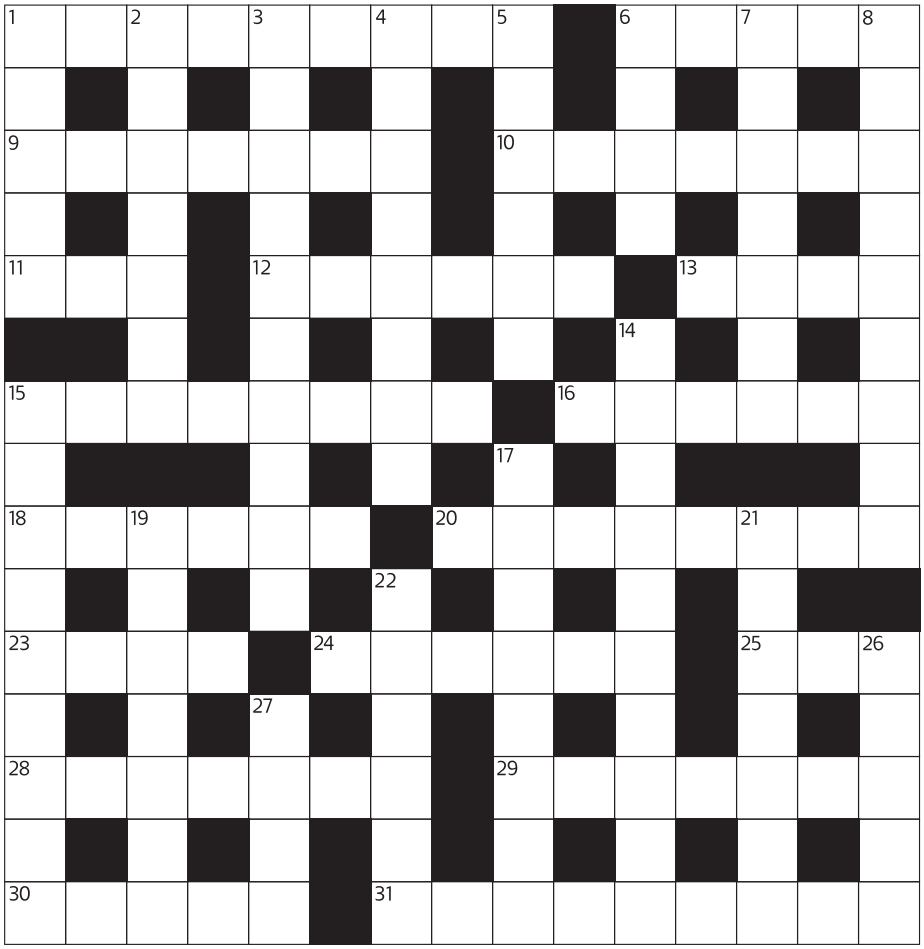
Puzzle No. 3182

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 Bring back some pictures, being well equipped to be crossed this way. (9)

6 See 11

9 Our Sam doesn't quite get finished, with a snaky type proving a way to undo things. (7)

10 One of the male group got older, but evidently got by. (7)

11 and **6** Where you retire has bad things, and annoys the life out of you! (8)

12 A particular aptitude for making money the old way? (6)

13 See 1 down

15 An old occupation for a woman who is politically inclined! (8)

16 See 26 down

18 Nothing in a sort of sting could get you valuable bars. (6)

20 Rather clever behavior could lead you into your proper place. (8)

23 and **25** Pale frog babies? Look here for help! (4,3)

24 See 1 down

25 See 23

28 What happens when the strings on your guitar get broken? It may be patent! (7)

29 Its other name implies a creepy type gets fruit, but it's a sign of victory when a heel is surrounded by nothing. (7)

30 Talk about the boat! Pert, as they used to say. (5)

31 If it's black, you might find an 8 here—but you're capable of being it! (2,3,4)

DOWN

1, 13 and **24** across A rather concise drawing, being how you may get a ride, with metal clinchers on the little boat. (9,6)

2 Part of the music is about a real low-down guy, in a supposedly simple and peaceful place. (7)

3 Implying a certain amount of give, being a point to a final one, going to town. (10)

4 With a bit to eat, works at a trade for the basic things you need. (8)

5 Little devilish types are exposed in studies about a small state. (6)

6 There's a point to people who tend to be high fliers. (4)

7 One is not thankful for seeing where the ashes are piled up. (7)

8 Not the main jobs, but that's where the spectators might be found. (9)

14 Quaver, in one sense. (6,4)

15 What happens when the puppy's wagger goes around in circles—and they may give you a boost on high. (4,5)

17 Lengthen the time it takes for a non-amateur to take on a stretch of land. (8)

19 The beginnings of how the basic units of heredity exist, somewhat ungrammatically. (7)

21 Mobile state? (7)

22 In a kayak, I'm bound, hand on hip, elbow out! (6)

26 and **16** across A teller you won't find at the bank! (5,6)

27 How to make an effort around a bearer of food. (4)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3181

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WARNING: IS YOUR MEMORY FADING?

Breakthrough medical research reveals "forgotten moments" may be caused by "brain starvation"

You may be able to avoid long-term issues if you act before it's too late. Leading medical researchers reveal discovery that triggers body's own production of mental "superfuel" and may help reverse the damage caused by stress and age.

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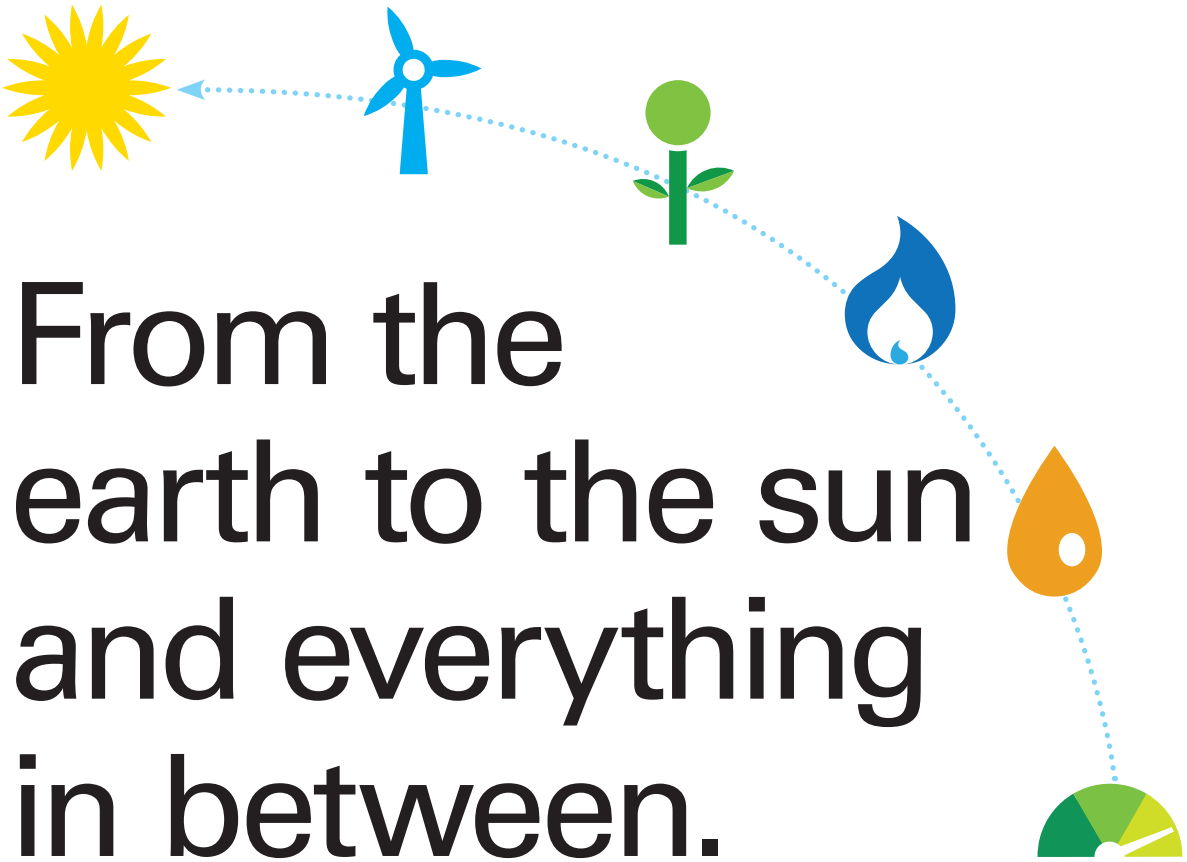

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